MEGHNAD BADH KAVYA

OR

THE FALL OF MEGHNAD.

BY

RAJENDRA NATH SEN, M.A., LL.B.

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THE FALL OF MEGHNAD.

(TRANSLATION OF MICHAEL'S MEGHNAD BADH KAVYA FROM BENGALI INTO ENGLISH IN BLANK VERSE.)

BY

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PREFACE.

THE Meghnad Badh Kavya of Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt ranks as an epic of first-class importance in the store-house of Bengali literature. It teems with sublime ideas and vivid imageries, almost bordering on the Miltonian, and spontaneously brings home to the mind the force and greatness of the author. An English translation of a work of this kind is by no means a comfortable idea, particularly when one seeks to keep up the spirit as well as the letter of the text. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no one has as yet seriously attempted a translation of this work which has in consequence remained a sealed book to Western scholars.

In India, as a general rule, we find that genius is neglected. For instance, Michael, with all his parts, was consigned to comparative obscurity in his time and died in a charitable dispensary. The posterity has to a great extent atoned for the injustice done to him by the eloquent tribute paid to his talents after his death. People are proud of Tagore and recognise his poetic genius which transcends the bounds of time and space: but with a curious anomaly few care to read his writings. The nobel prize which was awarded to him has much to do with the pre-eminent position which he now occupies. I need not multiply instances in demonstration of my theory. The case is, however, quite different in the West. There genius, though hidden like a gem in the darkest recesses of the world, is studiously hunted out, paraded before the eyes of the admiring public, as in a picture-house, and extolled to the sky.

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I, therefore, hit upon the plan of an English translation of Michael's epic in blank verse, so that the English-knowing public, at any rate, might be able to form a correct estimate of its worth. How far I have been successful in my attempt, time alone can justify.

As regards the merits of my translation, I confess I have ever been diffident. For an Indian, it is always an uphill task to express his sentiments aptly in a foreign language: and but for some cheering words from the Reverend E. J. Thompson (now a professor of Bengali Literature, Oxford College, England), a gentleman of vast erudition and profound scholarship, the book perhaps, would never have seen the light of the day.

Owing to my indisposition and circumstances over which I had no control, I suspect some mistakes (for the condonement of which I count on the indulgence of the reading public), might have unconsciously and inadvertently crept into my writings. But I am sure they will be corrected as occasion arises, particularly when it comes in for a second edition.

My humble capacities, I admit, are by no means commensurate with the magnitude and importance of the task I have taken in hand. But the success of an enterprise is as much due to the individual exertions of the worker as to the operation of the mysterious agency called the fates, dispensation of the Almighty, the taste of the reading public, and the spirit of the age. Says the poet :—

"The breath of Heaven must swell the sail,
Or all the toil is lost."

Benares City.
NOVEMBER, 1926.

AUTHOR.

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MEGHNAD BADH KAVYA

OR

THE FALL OF MEGHNAD.

—:0:—

BOOK I.

RAVAN INSTALLS MEGHNAD AS GENERAL OF HIS ARMY.

While fighting face-to-face, Vir-Vahu brave,
A diadem bright that topped the heroes' list,
(A prince renowned,—with merits rare endowed)
Was snatched away by Death before his time,
And thus transported to the land of shades,
Speak, Muse celestial, sweet of tongue, benign,
Which hero was deputed in his turn,
The mighty force of Rakshas to command
And to the bloody field of war despatched
By Ravan (foe of Ram), the glory of his race.
By what sagacious method Lakshman brave,
(The consort of Urmila, princess fair,)
Killed Meghnad, his country's hope and pride,
(Whom none on earth could ever beat in war,
Who vanquished e'en the mighty lord of sky)
And thus exempted Indra's heart from fear ?
O goddess kind, with hands like crystal white,
Descend to grace a silly wretch like me
In that, with zeal thy lotus feet he courts
And thus invokes thee to the earth below.
Chaste nymph, as thou didst grace Valmiki's tongue,

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And sit there-on, as on a lotus-throne,
When with an arrow in a forest dense
The hunter hit the pair of ruddy fowls,
'So, me, my mother, like compassion show.
For who on earth thy glory can conceive ?
The meanest of the mortals, Ratnakar,
A thief by trade, could conquer by thy grace,
(Like Shiva, Uma's lord) grim Death himself.
O source of boons, by virtue of thy boon,
Thief Ratnakar became a prince of bards,
A mine of poesy and knowledge vast,
As Ocean (Ratnakar) is ore of gems.
A tree of poison by thy magic touch
The sweet and tender grace of sandal holds.
But what religious merits can I claim
Alas ! to win thy favours, nymph divine ?
But, mark, the heart of mother more inclines
Towards the foolish one among her sons.
Enchantress of the world, replete with grace,
Alight from heaven, I pray, and show thy form
And me regale with shadow of thy feet,
In order that, impelled by martial zeal
And fervour, I may sing a song sublime.
Sweet fancy, come thou, too, and like the bee,
With honey wild extracted from the flowers
That bloom in plenty in the poet's heart,
Construct a hive and nectar thus provide,
For ever pandering to the country's joy.

Attended by his courtiers, ministers, friends
Unnumbered, seated humbly by his side,
The mighty Ravan filled a golden throne,
Effulgent like a peak which decks the crest
Of Hema-Kut that flasheth bright like gold.

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Ten glorious heads his stalwart figure topped !
The court of Ravan, matchless in the world,
With crystal built, was decked with splendid gems
Which shone like lilies in the Manas lake.
High columns, crimson, yellow, white and blue
In sweet succession held the golden roof,
As Vasuki, the lord of snakes, with care,
With hoods (a thousand), bears on head the earth.
From fringes dangled emeralds, rubies, pearls,
And diamonds bright, as hang sweet wreaths
Of leaves and flowers, from a temple's roof.
As lightning flashes, off and on, the gems,
The stones, the marbles gleamed and dazed the eye.
Endowed with eyes bewitching and a face
Whose beauty shamed the moon, the handmaid shook
The fan with arms as fair as lotus-stalks.
The bearer of the parasol appeared
As if the god of love were unconsumed
By Shiva's wrath and stationed there, alive !
The warder, hideous, sauntered at the gate
And seemed as if god Shiva with his spear
Was mounting guard, where Pandavas pitched their tent.
The lingering vernal wind in merry mood
Bore pleasant perfume, adding to its load
A wave of melody soft, but indistinct
And sweet like sounds of flute in Gokul-woods.
The Council-house of gem for Pandavas' use,

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At Indra-Prastha built by Moy himself,
Who rules the Gandarvas, the demigods,
Could hardly vie with Ravan's gorgeous court.
In this imperial council Ravan sat,
Struck dumb by sorrow at his son's demise.
Incessant tears fast streaming from his eyes
His robe majestic drenched ; so weeps a tree
With gushing sap in silence, pierced by darts.
Retreating from the field, the herald tired,
Besmeared with blood and sadly soiled with dust,
Appeared before the king with folded hands.
A crop of heroes by the tide of war,
Was swept away, including Vira-Vahu,
In carnage general in the battle-field.
Time's cruel, hideous current swallowed all,
But graciously preserved one Raksha-chief
Named Makaraksha, brave like Yakshas' king.
Nikasha's son, the crown of royal race,
Receiving tidings of his son's decease
From this messenger, simply burst with grief.
The courtiers likewise shared his mighty woe,
As when dark clouds obscure the glorious sun,
A dismal darkness mantles all the world.
Bewildered long he lay : then coming round,
The king upheaved a sigh and thus began,
"O herald, message thine to me appears
Unreal like a dream. For, how could Ram,
A mendicant, while fighting face to-face,
Destroy my son, the wielder of a bow
Before which gods affrighted bent their knees ?
Ah me! How could the fates with tender leaves
Of flowers fell down a huge Shalmali tree ?

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Alas ! my son, O crown of Rakshas' race,
I do not know the extent of my sins,
For which chastisement ever dogs my heels :
For look ! I lost a gem, thy valued self.
O cruel gods, for iniquities dire,
I must have committed unawares, meseems,
Ye snatched away from me my treasured gem.
Alack-a-day ! The pang I cannot bear !
I simply burst with grief and long to die.
Which warrior now the prestige of my line
Would keep, and face the crisis of the war ?
As while proceeding through the forest dense,
The woodman lops off branches, first of all
And last prepares to fell the tree itself,
The ruthless foe by inches saps my strength.
My kin at first, and next myself, I dread,
Would fall as victims to his fatal shaft.
For were it not the case, my brother dear,
Prince Kumbhakarn, like Shambhu brave and strong,
(The god provided with a trident keen)
Would never meet with an untimely death ;
Nor other heroes likewise pass away.
Woe, woe to thee, O cursed Shurpanakha !
For in an evil hour thou didst behold
This reptile full of venom in the wood
Of Panchavati which hath proved, alas !
The source of death, the spring of all my grief !
With thee condoling in a wretched hour,
Fair Sita, glowing like a brand of fire,
I (ill-advised) removed from Rama's side,
And with her presence graced this golden land.
O that I could my country leave for good,

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And bend my footsteps to the lonely woods
To quench the fire that eats away my heart.
For like a stage adorned with leaves of flowers
And lit by lamps, my land was bright and fair.
The scale is turned, alas! for, one-by one,
The lights go out, the blooming flowers decay:
The violin, flute, the drum and lute are hushed.
Then why should I in sadness linger here?
For who would care to dwell in dismal gloom?"

Thus loud lamented Ravan, Rakshas' king:
So wept in quondam days the monarch blind
At Hastina when Sanjay tidings brought,
That all his sons in Kurukshetra's field,
Were slain by Bhima-Sen of mighty arms.
Sage Saran, premier, then with folded hands
Arose and humbly thus addressed the king:—
"O pardon! summit of the Rakshas' race!
Because (thy bondsman) I presume to speak.
For who on earth to thee can give advice?
But bear in mind the fact, my worthy liege,
The mountain, undisturbed, sustains the blow,
E'en though its crest communing with the sky,
By strokes of lightning is reduced to dust.
The world, besides, is all a fleeting show:
A vain delusion, all its joy and grief
Which fools affect alone and not the wise."
To him the king of Lanka thus replied:—
"Thy words are just, O Saran. I admit
Unreal is the world: its joy and grief
Are unsubstantial: this is plain enough:
The idea yet soothes not the weeping soul.
If time relentless from the stem of heart

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Most rudely plucks a flower which grows thereon,
It dips dejected in the sea of grief,
As sinks in water deep the lily stalk,
If robbed of lily which it prized so high."
The monarch paused and eyed the herald next
And him he thus addressed :– O herald good,
Describe to me, I pray, how fell the brave
Vir-Vahu, terror of the gods in fight."
Inclining low before the royal feet,
With folded hands, the herald thus began,
"Alas! my liege, the marvel who can tell ?
And how may I describe the prince's feat ?
As runneth wild an elephant to the wood
Of reeds, the hero armed with bow advanced
And made a furious onset on the foe.
My heart with terror mighty quivers still,
As I his hideous shout recall to mind !
O lord of Rakshas, I have heard, indeed !
The roars of thunder, billows, lions fierce :
And through the sky I saw the lightning speed,
But never did I hear throughout the world
A more appalling, rattling twang of bow,
Or see an arrow deadler in my life !
The heroes led by Vir-Vahu brave
The field of battle entered, like the herd
Of elephants with their chief : a smoke of dust
Arose and thickly clustered in the sky.
It seemed as if indignant clouds had rushed
And swallowed welkin : arrows, thick and fast,
With hisses flying, showed the skill of hand
The hero wielded. Glory to his might !
Foes countless, crushed and vanquished, breathed their last.

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Thus fought thy son, attended by his force,
With his opponents dreaded. Later on,
The best of heroes Ram approached the field.
A golden diadem graced his noble head :
He held a mighty bow, with gems inlaid
Like Indra's bow," And saying this, he stopped
And wept in silence, as a man laments
When past misfortunes flash across his mind.
The courtiers all in silence likewise wept
With streaming eyes. King Ravan (sole delight
Of Mandodari, pretty lovely queen),
Addressed the herald gently thus again :—
"O message-bearer, speak that I may hear
How Dashrath's offspring slew my valiant son."
The herald went on, "Monarch of the world,
O valued treasure of the Raksha race,
What suited words I may employ, I pray,
To sketch the great event ? For, as incensed,
With eyes on fire and gnashing, fearful teeth,
The lion springs and rushes on a bull,
The hero Ram attacked the prince : and fierce
The battle-current raged. It seemed as if
The sea collided with its foe, the wind !
Swords countless, keen, unsheathed, began to flash
Like flames of fire beneath a cloud of smoke :
Loud conches sounded like the ocean deep !
What more can I describe ? For heinous sins
I must have committed in my previous birth
Myself alone survived. Alas ! Oh fates !
Wherein I erred, to merit at your hands
The torture which my heart endures to-day ?
Why did I not on bed of arrows lie,

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In glory, happy comrade of the prince
Vira-Vahu brave, who bled for country's cause ?
But I am not to blame, O king, at all :
My chest is marked, behold, and not my back,
With wounds inflicted by a heartless foe."
And here the Raksha paused and bowed his head.
Then Lanka's lord, with joy and dole combined,
Said, "Bravo, herald ! Doth there breathe on earth
A warrior who is not impelled to war
By thy heroic speech ? At clarion's call
How can a deadly snake repose in peace
Within its hole ? Ah ! Lanka's blessed thrice
In that heroic sons her womb sustains.
O courtiers, in a body let us go
And see in person how my gallant son,
The best of heroes, dying, decks the field,
And with the scene so lofty cheer our eyes."
The lord of Rakshas got upon his tower
And like god Phoebus on the Golden Peak
Of Rise, resplendent, glorious looked.
A lovely land with golden palace crowned,
Fair Lanka (all around) her charms displayed :
A row of golden mansions filled the groves :
And ponds whose currents had a silver grace
With lilies teemed : and trees and flowers gay
The eye enchanted like fair maidens' youth.
The diamond marked the crest of temples fine :
And markets glazed with gems of various hues :
It seemed as if the earth, O Lanka fair,
Procuring all the treasure from her ores
Consigned it out of reverence to thy feet :

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The world adores thee, O abode of bliss !
The lord of Rakshas saw the ramparts high
Unmoved like rocks ; and on the top of these
Stood armed guards, inspired with martial zeal,
As lions roam on peaks of lofty hills.
The sly abductor of the spouse of Ram
Observed the four-fold gates of lion, (closed),
Where elephant-drivers, riders, horse and foot,
In countless numbers, bravely mounted guard.
Beyond the city, to his eyes the foes
Were prominent like the sands on ocean-beach,
Or like the stars that grace the vaults of heaven.
At eastern gate was stationed hero Neel
In fight resistless : at the southern gate
Was posted Angad, in his youthful strength
Secure, and robust like an elephant young,
Or like a dragon with his checkered skin
At winter's close; majestic in his gait,
With hood uplifted and arolling tongue
(As trident pointed) prowling for his prey.
At northern gate, Sugriva king himself,
A lion in his strength, maintained his post :
At western gate, the son of Dashrath, Ram,
(Without his spouse, dejected like the Moon,
When parted from his joy, his lily bride),
His station held, attended by his friend
Bhibhishan, Lakshman and the son of Wind
Named Hanuman, gigantic like a cliff.
The foe besieged the city made of gold
A hundred-fold, as in a forest dense
A fowlers' band with caution, care and skill
Besets a lioness tangled in a snare,
Like Chandi dreadful, lovely to behold.

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Anon, the Rakṣhas' king observed with awe
The field of battle haunted by foul fiends,
A camping ground of jackals, vultures vile
And barking dogs who held a merry feast :
And out of these unwelcome guests, some flew,
Or sat : some rushed and chased with flapping wings
Congenial birds impelled by greed of flesh:
Some roared with savage joy and stuffed their maw :
Or sucked the blood which flowed in currents swift.
Elephants huge and steeds of hurricane breed
Lay paralysed : and countless broken cars
And elephant-drivers, spearmen, horse and foot
And charioteers, all jumbled in a mass
Chaotic, lay together in the field.
Bright armours, shields, bows, arrows, javelins, slings,
And quivers, dumbbells, spears acute and swords,
Diadems decked with gems and helmets bright,
Disordered, sweetly kissed the ground :
The fallen bards lay, mixed up with the arms.
With staff in hand which bore the golden flag,
The standard-bearer, struck by Yama's mace,
Dropped prostrate on the ground to rise no more.
As farmers mow the grain with golden crest,
The shaft of Ram, the sun of solar race,
Had mown the Rakshas in the field of war.
Lay lowly on the ground the heroes' crown,
Virvahu, crushing with his deadly weight,
His gallant foes, as fell Ghatotkach dread,

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Reared fondly like an eaglet in his nest
By Hidimba, when Karna brave, to shield
The Kauravas, shook and hurled his fatal dart.
O'er-whelmed with grief, the king thus spake again :—
" The bed whereon thou liest, lovely prince,
Is ever courted by the brave on earth.
Thus trampling in the field the foe despised,
Who fears to die, to keep his native land ?
The fool who doth is cursed a hundred times.
But, child, the heart to delusion a prey
Is like a flower tender ; and the pang
Which sad bereavement brings to it is keen,
As if it were inflicted by the bolt
Which drops from heavens above and known
By God alone, who fully reads the heart.
I can't describe it. Gracious God, Most High !
Methinks the world is mere thy sporting ground :
For were it not the case, wouldst thou exult
In pain and torments which thy creatures feel ?
Thy ways are strange, O father of the world !
O lion' mongst the brave, Virvahu child,
Without thee, how can I sustain my life ?"
Thus loud lamented Ravan, Rakshas' king :—
Then turned his eyes and saw the sea afar,
The dwelling house of Makars, (seals or fish).
Upon its surface floated slabs of rock
Held tight by knots together, hard and strong,
And looked like clouds gigantic lulled to rest.
From both directions rushing, off and on,
Beset with foams, as Vasuki with hoods,
The breakers roared and raised their head aloft.
Uncommon was the bridge, a work of skill

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Divine and spacious like a royal road.
The currents gave a low and pleasing note,
Like rains descending, passing through the drain.
The best of heroes, Ravan, cut at heart,
Addressed the potent sea and thus began,
"O Neptune, graceful is the wreath, indeed!
Thon wieldest round thy neck. But shame I cry
Upon thy might, unconquered deemed so long!
Who could on earth thy sweeping tide resist?
O doughty, why this taint upon thy brow,
This ornament of slabs, no match for gems
Thy mines contain? What virtue, Ram, I ask
Can claim, to render thee his willing tool?
For what offence thy feet those fetters wield?
Thou art the rival of the Wind to whom,
Thy billows raging fierce their gauntlet throw.
The juggler chains a petty bear and plays
With him, indeed! But can he ever tie
A lion's royal feet with wretched noose?
O lord of water blue, this golden land,
Fair Lanka, like Kaustubha on the chest
Of Krishna, on thy surging bosom shines.
Pray, Ocean, why dost thou torment her, then?
Arise, I say, destroy this feeble mound
With strength which hero-like thou dost sustain:
Remove the blot of bondage from thy brow:
Assert thy might: thy noble fame retrieve:
And in the water which no bottom knows,
Thy foe relentless dip and cheer our heart:
Shake of thy shackles, Neptune, I beseech."
His harangue ended thus, the Rakshas' lord,
Returned to court and filled the golden throne

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Again. Harassed by care, absorbed in grief,
He mused in silence long. There, courtiers, friends
And councillors, like statues, mute and still,
Sat down dejected. But a stream of wail,
Piteous, mingled with the music shrill
Of anklets tinkling and the girdl's enote,
Was wafted there anon. The doleful cry
Disturbed the lull of Ravan's royal court.
Queen Chitrangada, tended by her maids
Of Honor, entered now the stately hall.
Her locks were hanging loose : her dainty form
Put off its royal jewels, as a plant
(With all its grace), in winter sheds its bloom.
Her eyes were moist with tears like tender-leaves
Of lotus sprinkled with the dews of night.
The heavy loss the queen sustained, alas !
Was shocking to her heart. She deeply mourned,
As weeps the bird afficted, when her nest
A reptile vile assails and eats her young.
Her darling son Virvahu was no more !
A storm of mourning raged in Ravan's court,—
The court which with the grace of maidens shone
Resembling fire of heaven. The hair let loose
Was like the clouds : the sigh, like Pralay-wind
Which spells destruction to the trembling world :
The tears, like raindrops : wails, like thunder's roar.
The king of Lanka started to his feet :
The crying maid, the chowrie dropped below :

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The parasol slipped from weeping bearer's hand :
Indignant and aggrieved, the guard unsheathed
His sword : and restless kinsmen, friends,
And ministers got up and loudly moaned.
Chaste Chitra, then, at Ravan sweetly glanced
And gently thus began :—"By grace of God,
I had a valued gem, my only son.
As to the hollow of a tree, the bird consigns
With care her young one, so my humble self,
To thy protection, crown of Rakshas' race,
My child commended. Now, I find him not !
A pauper's wealth a king ought to maintain :
How fares my precious gem, I wish to know.
Look ! I am poor : so thou, O mighty king,
Art bound to keep the gem I prize so high."
To her the Raksha king thus made reply,
" Thy censure, O my love, I merit not :
Queen, blame not one whom rule the evil stars :
Chastise not me oppressed by cruel fates.
My country in her blessed womb sustained
Heroic sons. They all are dead and gone,
Converting Lanka to a dreary waste !
As with the summer's advent, in the woods,
The flower fades and water dries in pools,
My land is rendered waste by Dashrath's son.
Look ! how a porcupine the betel field
Assails, and scatters (round) the betel-leaves,
So Rama, to a desert turns this soil.
The sea itself, O queen, the fetters wields
Most tamely round its feet at his desire.
So much thou feelest for a single son:—
I lost a hundred sons :—how severe the shock,

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My heart sustains, imagine, for a while !
As beams of cotton (silk), impelled by winds,
Disordered fly and kiss the ground anon,
The flowers of the Rakshas' race sublime
Are fading in the war. The fates, meseems,
Lift up their hands my Lanka to destroy."
The lord of Rakshas paused. And hanging down
Her graceful face attractive like the Moon,
Gandarvas' daughter Chitra wept aggrieved
At her bereavement. Rama's foe resumed
His address thus : "This grief becomes thee not,
My queen, in that thy good and valorous son,
Destroying in the field thy country's foe,
Ascended heaven. Heroes' mother, thou !
Thy son heroic for his country bled.
His death, my sweet, thou shouldst not take to heart
So deeply : for he hath glorified my race."
Responded Chitra graced with lovely eyes,
" Blessed is he who slays his country's foe :
Auspicious was his birth : and blessed, indeed !
The mother who the hero bore in womb.
But bear in mind the fact, my noble lord,
Between Ayodhya and thy land, the cry
Is far. What motive prompted Ram, O king,
To leave his land and visit thy domain ?
This golden Lanka, matchless in the world,
Is sine-cure for even Indra's eye :
The sea immures it like a silver-wall.
They say, the wretched Ram on Sarju's coast
Resides. Aspires he for thy golden throne ?

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And may a dwarf aspire to catch the moon?
Then why thou callest him, our country's foe?
Still slight him not, I say. The serpent bends
His head most meekly, as a general rule:
But, when assailed, expands his dreaded hood,
And runs incensed his assailant to bite.
For who in Lanka lit this fatal brand?
By thee, my daring lord, a wind was sown:
And whirl-wind is the harvest thou dost reap:
A source of sad disaster to the Rakshas' race!"
Virvahu's mother, lecturing thus her lord,
Returned to her recess with all her maids.
Abashed and deep indignant Rama's foe
Descended from his golden throne of state
And said, "No hero now survives, alas!
To bear the brunt and stem the tide of war.
As all have perished, I must take the lead
In person, then. Be ready for the field,
O band of soldiers, jewels of the land.
I want to test what virtue Rama wields,
The diadem of his race. The world to-day
Shall either lose its Ravan or its Ram."
Nikasha's son, a lion mongst the brave,
Announcing thus his will, the drum began
To blow in council deeply like the clouds.
Excited by that hideous roar and fired
With zeal heroic, Rakshas' gallant band,
The terror of the demons, gods and men,
Prepared for war. Anon, the elephants' band,
Resistless like the tide of sea, emerged
From elephant-shed. The chargers in a rage
The bridles bit and from the stable ran
And galloping fast their arched necks displayed.

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The chariots golden-crested dashed in speed
And with their gleam suffused the whole domain.
With golden turbans flashing on the head
And swords in scabbards bright, and shields
Impervious, and armours flashing bright,
The infantry, the stoutest in the world,
In order marched. The elephant-driver came
Like Indra armed with thunder on a cloud.
Like Ashwin's son appeared the charioteer
Equipped with sling and threatening to destroy.
Like wild-fire raging fierce, the flash of arms
Spread far and wide, and scaled the heavens anon.
The standard-bearer raised the royal flag:
It seemed as if the eagle, bird divine,
Unfurled his mighty wings and soared on high.
In all directions beat the drum of war
And sounded deeply: gaily chargers neighed.
The elephant's trumpet mingled with the note
Of conches hideous: and the twang of bows
Combined with weapon's clank a clamour raised,
Which with its shocking violence stunned the ear.
Fair Lanka, golden, trampled by the feet
Of heroes trembled. Mighty Neptune roared
Indignant: and the tumult stirred the place
Where, in the grove of golden lilies bright
In ocean's layer, seated on a throne
Of corals, fair Varuni, Ocean's spouse,
Her locks resplendent decked with strings of pearls.
Attracted by the noise the goddess chaste
Astonished gave a start and looked around,

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And turning to her maid-attendant thus
She spake: "The ocean, look, my comrade dear,
Is getting restless. Dost thou know the cause?
Look up, I pray. This royal mansion's vault
Inlaid with pearls is quaking, off and on.
I fear presumptuous winds have reappeared
To contest with the waves. The god of wind
Forgot his promise soon. Oh! fie on him!
At Indra's council I the wind-god prayed
To chain his retinue (winds) and shut them up.
The god with smiles replied; "O Ocean's spouse,
Bestow on me the right with gentle streams,
(Transparent vassals thine), to flirt on earth.
On this condition I will chain the winds."
He gained my consent direct. Wherefore, then,
The god of wind intrudes on our domain?"
Replied the maid-attendant murmuring thus:—
"O Neptune's spouse, the Wind is not to blame;
Nor merits he thy ire; no tempest blows,
As thou dost fancy; but in tempest's form
King Ravan is preparing for the war,
In golden Lanka with a view to crush
The pride which swayeth hero Rama's heart."
To her Varuni thus:—"Thy words are just.
For Sita's sake, the hero Ram, her lord,
Is fighting tooth and nail, with Lanka's king.
Pray, heed my counsel, mate. The goddess fair,
Imperial Lakshmi, guarding Rakshas' race,
A friend of mine, resides in Lanka now.
To her, thou hasten; for I long to know
Fresh news about the present war which beats
All record. Tender to the graceful nymph

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This golden lily saying; "On the floor
Beneath the throne of lotus which she graced
With crimson feet, this flower hath gaily bloomed
E'er since the day she left the sea-abode,
(Enshrouded now in darkness), for her home."
Then as a restless carb emerges from the stream
To show the sun its splendid silver grace,
The nymph Murala came out from the sea,
And went on errand, as her friend advised.
And at the lotus-mansion, on a throne
Of lotus, filled with blooming lotus-flowers
In Lanka where the goddess Lakshmi sat,
The joy of Vishnu's heart, her consort dear,
The nymph alighted. For a while she paused
(Before she crossed the threshold), and regaled
Her eyes by gazing at a face whose grace
Enchants the Lord supreme who Cupid charms.
The vernal wind, her ever willing slave,
Blew with a hissing sound and to secure
Sweet nectar kissed the goddess' lotus feet.
The mansion teemed with flowers, as Kuver's house
Of gold o'er-flows with gems. On incense-pots
Of gold (unnumbered), myrrh and aloe burnt
And round the temple perfume sweet exhaled.
The lamps of gold containing fragrant oil
(Lit-up with care) like full-moon ever glowed
Eclipsing thus the gleam of fire-flies.
Appeared sweet Lakshmi like Diana bright,
With face averted and dejected looks,
As, on the day of Vijoy, in our land,
Fair Durga droops despite her lunar grace.

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Effulgent, on a gorgeous lotus throne,
Her hand reposing in her lotus-palm,
The goddess Lakshmi sat. Alas! Could grief
Assail a heart as tender as a flower?
The fair Murala with a gentle gait
The temple entered, and before her feet
Inclined. The emblem of the royal grace
Of Lanka, goddess Lakshmi blessed the nymph
And said, "what brings thee here, Murala sweet?
And where is Varuni, my dearest friend?
I can't forget her. For while a guest
At sea, to me her kindness knew no bounds:
And if without my lord I lived so long,
It was because her love sustained my strength.
And is my fair companion doing well?"
To her the pretty Murala spake thus,
"God Neptune's wife immune from danger dwells
In Ocean's layer. Ram and Ravan fight
For Sita's sake: and tidings of the war
She wants to gather. Goddess chaste, accept
This lily merry, (blooming on the floor
Thy holy scarlet feet had graced with touch).
To thee the flower she, therefore, dedicates."
Afflicted Lakshmi, moon-light of the land,
(Vaikuntha), heaved a sigh and thus began,
"As wastes the sea-coast washed by restless waves,
So Ravan vile declines from day to day.
The facts are galling. Kumbhakarna brave
And grim: and like a solid rock unmoved
And stalwart, Akampan: and Atikay
Who moved his chariot in the war with skill:

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And Rakshas countless like the sands of sea
Have fallen in the field. The hero's crown
Virvahu brave hath likewise passed away.
A wail thou hearest in the harem, friend?
My heart is bursting at the ladies' moan
I always hear and long to leave the land.
In every house, O herald, deeply mourns
A childless mother or a widowed wife."
Fair Murala thus queried, "Goddess, pray,
Which hero in his martial zeal today
Is getting ready for the war again?"
Replied the wife of Madhav, "Who prepares
For war, I cannot say. Murala dear,
Let both of us advance to trace him out."
So saying, goddess Lakshmi and her friend
Murala dressed in silk, and both disguised
As Rakshas' wives proceeded from the fane.
The tinkling anklets gaily graced their feet:
And bracelets bright, their arms. The girdle, fine
And lovely, decked their thin and slender waists:
And stationed at the threshold of the fane
The nymphs observed the town. The royal road,
They saw, was lined with soldiers dread.
Like currents of the sea impelled by winds,
The chariots passed and rolled their rattling wheels.
Convulsing, trampling with his feet the earth,
The steed like tempest rushed. And like grim Yam
Who holds the fatal mace, the elephant moved
Uplifting his proboscis: and the drum of war

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Beat loud and sounded deeply: standards flew
Inlaid with gems in numbers. Lanka's wives,
Whose siren grace could conquer all the world,
At windows of their golden mansions stood
And showered copious flowers with sounds
That augered well. At Lakshmi's lunar face
Murala sweetly glanced and thus began,
"O goddess, look, the heaven, it seems, its wealth
Hath transferred to the earth. Nay, Indra's self,
Methinks, attended by his force divine,
Hath entered Lanka. Kind and gracious nymph,
Pray, let me know about the heroes great
Who, led by martial zeal, prepare for war
To-day." Complacent Lakshmi, queried thus,
Her eyes of lotus lifting, answered soft,
"Alas! my comrade, Lanka, land of gold,
Presents the aspect of a dreary wild:
For heroes who impelled their cars with skill
In war, prefection's pink and nation's cream,
The terror of the demons, gods and men,
Have by the tide of war been swept away,
Which none could turn. The gem of Raghu's race
Sustains his weapons in a lucky hour.
There, mounted on a golden crested war,
With hideous looks, the prince of Rakshas' band,
In war unyielding, armed with iron-bow
Brave Virupaksh behold! And by his side
Kalnemi armed with sling on elephant's back
Is seated, grim and dread like angel Death
Inclined to kill his foe. On horse-back there,
With mace in hand, gigantic like the palm,
Tal-Jangha moves, like holder of the club,

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Lord Krishna, foe of Moor; and frantic grown
With martial fury, Raksha-Bhishan there,
Chivalrous, shows his adamant chest:
And many a hero else, I cannot name.
But legions brave like these have sunk in war,
As in a forest dense gigantic trees
Beset with wild-fire crumble into dust."
Murala queried thus :—"O nymph divine,
Pray, why is Maghnad, lion of Raksha race
(Who conquered Indra), missing at this hour ?
Chaste goddess, speak if he is dead and gone?"
Responded Lakshmi with a graceful smile,
"It seems the prince is revelling in the wood
Called Pramod-grove, unconscious of the fact
That brave Virvahu hath been slain in war.
Murala sweetest, prithee, hasten back
To Varuni and tell her that I long
To leave fair Lanka for mine own domain,
As early as I can. For Lanka's lord,
Himself destruction courts through wicked deeds.
This precious land of gold beset with sins
Assumes the dreary aspect of a pool
Which limpid once is rendered foul by rain.
The land, alas, which harboured me so long
Is now a gall and worm-wood to mine eyes.
Wing back, thy way, I pray, to Varuni
Who, resting in her home of pearls, adorns
The throne of corals bright : and I proceed
To Meghanad, to bring him to this place.
To Nemesis a prey, this land is doomed."
To goddess Lakshmi Murala humbly bowed
And bidding her adieu, she soared on high,
So flies a peacock, having first regaled

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The eye with checkered hues of plumage (bright
Like rainbow) in a merry lovely grove.
Alighting at the coast of Ocean vast,
She melted in the water. Lakshmi, fair
And lotus-eyed, the grace of Rakshas' race,
The spouse of Vishńu, on the other hand,
Arose, soared lightly through the azure sky,
And bent her footsteps to her goal, the place
Where dwelt the helmet of the heroes' race
Inspiring terror e'en in Indra's heart.
At length the damsel crowned with silken hair
Attained the place where Indra's victor sat,
By success ever woo-ed in fields of war.
Like Indra's land was glowing his domain:
By gems surmounted golden columns held
The portico. In all directions, groves
Displayed their beauty like the Nandan woods.
On branches perched the cuckoos cooed: the humming bees.
Adventurous roamed; and fragrant flowers bloomed;
Gay fountains gurgled; rustled leaves; and hissed
The breeze. The goddess at the gate of gold
Beheld Amazons stalwart, mounting guard
With bow in hands; their shoulders held the load
Of hanging hair and quivers fraught with death.
Like lightning, flashed along with waving locks.
(In cases made of diamonds) arrows keen
And bright and dread like dragons crowned with gems.
Look! How the rays of sun the lotus warm!
So armours golden lit their rising breasts.
Acute as were the arrows in the case,

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The glances of their eyes were keener still.
The damsels wandered, flushed with prime of youth
Like female elephants woo-ed by season spring.
The girdle round their waist, the anklet bright,
Moved gently, gave a sweet-melodious note.
The lute, the cup of music, drum and flute
Sent forth a tune delightful ; and the wave
Of song united with the sound above
Was carried, far and wide, and soothed the ear.
Attended by the nymphs, the hero ranged, as roves
The lord of night with Daksha's daughters fair ;
Or as with flute in hand, at Kadam's root
The dancing cowherd with the milk-maids fair,
O' Jamna, offspring of the noble sun,
With pleasure rambles at thy merry coast.
With staff in hand and clad in garments white
Appeared the goddess Lakshmi, Vishnu's spouse,
In guise of Pravasa, a matron grey,
The foster-mother of the gallant prince.
The best of warriors got up from his throne
And bowing low before his nurse spake thus,
"O mother, thou art welcome thrice ! But pray
What means this visit of surprise ? Inform
Thy bondsman of the welfare of his land."
The Ocean's daughter (in disguise) a kiss
Imprinted on the hero's head and said,
"Alas ! my son, the land of gold is doomed :
But sorrow ties my tongue. Thy brother brave
Virvahu, fighting, hath been slain in war.
Convulsed with mighty grief, thy sire himself
His army leads to-day against the foe."
The hero rubbed his eyes surprised and said,

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"O madam ! news indeed ! who and when and where
My lovely younger brother slew ? The other day,
In fight nocturnal, raining arrows keen
I slew the crafty Ram. The foe was cut
To pieces. What, this tidings thou hast brought
(Most curious) means, O mother, let me know.?"
The best of gems, abstracted from the ore
Of ocean, Lakshmi graceful, thus replied,
"Alas ! my son, a juggler, Sita's lord,
Destroyed by thee, is now restored to life.
Proceed, O Raksha prince, in haste and keep
Thy race's prestige at this critical hour."
The hero was incensed, and tore his wreath,
And threw his bracelet down, and set his foot
Upon his crown which glowed like Asok bright
That falls from tree below. The prince exclaimed,
(His voice subdued by grief), "Alack-a-day !
The golden Lanka is besieged by foes :
And shame on me ! I court fair damsels here.
This act shall spoil the fame of Ravan's son,
A prince who conquered Indra by his might.
What, ho ! my retinue, bring my chariot here :
With foeman's blood this blot I will remove."
Prince Meghnad who his car impelled with skill
In war, arrayed in martial dress, now shone
Like Kartik bent on slaying Tarak dread.
He vied, indeed, with Arjun in his grace
Disguised as Vrihan-Nala and equipped
With arms beneath Acacia Suma tree,
By Virat's son attended and intent
On wresting horned cattle from the foe.
His car was sombre like the clouds ; the wheels

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Like lightning flashed; the flag possessed the grace
Of rainbow; horses beat the winds in speed.
The hero, flushed with pride a hero feels,
The car ascended. Fair Pramila, next,
His loving spouse, arrived and held his hands
And weeping said, "O master of my life,
Myself, thy humble servant leaving here,
Ah! whither dost thou run? Imagine, love,
Can I, a wretch, without thy presence, live?
Look! O my lord, the elephant in the woods,
Although he spurns a creeper's blandishments
That hold him fast, is none the less disposed
To give it shelter 'neath his gracious feet:-
An act becoming well the lord of herds!
O sea of mercy, wherefore dost thou leave
Thy faithful maid-attendant in the lurch?"
Replied the hero with a pensive smile:-
"My consort, though I vanquished Indra's might,
Thy love is victor still: for who on earth
Can loose the chain which binds me to thy will?
O charmer fair, whose beauty shames the moon,
Take heart of grace, I pray, and don't despond.
For by thy love I swear that by my might
No sooner do I slay that wretched Ram
Than I retrace my steps to thee. Adieu!"
With roar tremendous did the chariot huge
Ascend the sky, as if with golden wings
Uplifted, Mainak, prince of mountains, flew
And with his lustre bright suffused the sky.
With spirit flushed, the hero pulled the string
Of his colossal bow which gave a twang
Appalling like the yell of Krishna's bird

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Which rends the clouds. The ocean shook convulsed:
The golden Lanka quailed. King Ravan in his turn
Invoked with zeal his army to the war.
The war-drum beat and sounded, far and wide,
And roused the slumbering echoes in their caves.
The elephants with the chargers joined their notes.
The horsemen cheered the foot: charioteers
Acclaimed : the foot responded with a shout;
The flag of silk triumphant raised its head
Aloft: the flash of armour scaled the sky.
Anon, the hero Meghnad dashed with speed
And reaching home alighted from the car :
The boastful Rakshas raised a hue and cry.
The son adored his father's feet and said
With folded hands, "O lord of Rakshas' race,
Dead Rama, (gather I,) hath been restored
To life. This juggler's trick which he performs,
Is passing strange. But bid me, noble king,
Destory the vile offender, root and branch.
First crumbling him to dust by dreadful fire
My arrow wields, with weapon charged with wind
His ashes I will scatter; or in chains
I will that trickster drag before thy feet."
The king of golden Lanka pressed the prince,
And kissed his head, and gently answered thus :-
"O crown and hope of Rakshas, thee, my child,
My heart is not at all inclined to send
To this destructive war again. Alas!

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Ungracious are the fates. For who on earth
Hath ever heard that stones on water float
Or that the dead revive?" And him his son
Thus answered, "Dost thou fear that wretch,
A man of straw? The world shall cry reproach
And shame, if thou in person lead the war,
While I, thy bondsman, live. Nay. Indra's self
Who rides on back of clouds shall laugh to scorn:
The god of fire shall look incensed. I pray,
Once more, my father, bid me fight. And I shall see
What medicine brings the foe to life again."
The lord of Rakshas thus: "My brother dear
Named Kumbha-karna whom through fear I roused
From sleep before the proper time expired:
His body there on sea-coast prostrate lies,
And like a tree or crest of mountain hit
By thunder tumbling on the ground revolves.
But if thou art determined on the war,
First worship, O my son, thy favourite god,
With suited sacrifice at Nikumbhil,
(The cave or grove at Lanka's western gate).
As general of my force, I thee annoint:
Behold, the sun is set; at break of day,
Thou shalt proceed to fight with hero Ram."
The king, so saying, duly held in hand
The Ganges water and installed the prince.
Anon the bards began to play on lutes
And sang enraptured thus; "O golden land
Of Rakshas! Thou art weeping sore aggrieved
Thy hair is dangling loosely on the floor;

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Thy diamond-diadem rolleth on the ground
Along with other trinkets, royal nymph !
Arise and cheer up, graceful maid ; for look !
The Rakshas' sun is rising in the east.
Thy night of grief profound is at an end.
Arise, O queen, and see the bow (that decks
The hero's dreadful arm) whose deafening twang
Ascending heaven, the face of Indra pales.
Behold the case of weapons, flashing keen
And bright like Pasupat, inspiring awe
In Shiva's heart. Among the brave, a lion,
Endowed with best of virtues and a grace
Which charms the fair, behold the gallant prince
Named Meghnad ! The queen is blessed, indeed,
The hero's mother. And the king, the lord
Of Rakshas, Nikasha's son, is likewise blessed !
And blessed is Lanka thrice, the land of gold,
That in her womb a band of heroes wields !
And, list, O Echo, daughter of the sky,
Announce the fact as broadly as thou can,
The prince who conquered Indra and chastised
His foe, is getting ready for the war,
Thus shaking in the camp the heart of Ram,
Bibhishan traitor, blot on Rahshas' race,
And trifling beasts that haunt the Dandak woods.
The trumpet flourished : loud the Rakshas roared
And shouts of conquest filled the land of gold.

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BOOK II.

INDRA, GOD OF HEAVEN, SENDS CELESTIAL WEAPONS TO RAMA TO HELP HIM IN THE WAR.

The sun was set : appeared the blessed Eve :
A single gem adorned her dusky brow.
The lily bloomed. In gloom the lotus drooped
In pond and shut its eyes : and coo-ing soft
The songster sought its nest to take repose :
The bellowing cow to pen retraced her steps.
Anon, with graceful moon and stars adorned
The smiling night advanced : and merry winds,
Sweet perfume-bearers, blew from every side,
In triumph whispering in the ears of all
The treasure they usurped by kissing flowers.
At length arrived the gentle goddess Sleep
And in her precious feet asylum lent
To denizens of the water and the land,
As in her lap refreshing like a nest
The tender mother lulls her infant child.
The Night, the moon's delight, approached high heaven
Where Indra filled a royal, golden throne,
Presiding over the council of the gods.
His left was graced by presence of his spouse,
Queen Shachi, Pulam's child, with lovely eyes.
A god, the parasol majestic held
Above his head : a maid the chowrie moved.
The gentle breeze that bore ambrosial scent

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Of Nandan-woods in all directions blew,
In wanton mood. With heavenly music sweet
The sides resounded. Modes of music (six),
And tunes six times the number of the last,
Incarnate sang. And Rambha, Urvashi,
And Chitra-lekha sweet, with beaming smiles
And Mishra-Keshi with luxuriant hair
(Celestial whores) arrived and gaily danced :
And tinkling trinkets cheered the heart of gods.
The Gandarvas in golden pots supplied
The nectar. Some procured the meal divine :
Some bore the saffron, sandal or the musk,
Or filaments of flowers, or garlands twined
With corals fragrant : thus the heart of Jove
In council floated on a sea of joy :
When, sudden. goddess Lakshmi, type of grace
Imperial of Rakshas' race, appeared
And with her radiance lighted Indra's land.
The lord of Shachi humbly bent his head
Before her feet. The goddess lotus-eyed
Who dwells in Vishnu's heart addressed him thus,
" O Indra, listen. I would just explain
Why thee I visit thus in council here. "
Thus Indra spake, " O offspring of the sea,
Enchantress of the world, thy scarlet feet
Who not adores ? O mother, good and kind,
A person who secures thy looks benign
Is blessed, indeed : and blessed is his life.
What merit of thy humble servant here
Hath earned for him this pleasure of a sight
Beatific, divine, O goddess, speak ? "
The goddess answered thus, " I long have dwelt
In golden Lanka, rich as land divine.

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The Raksha king with many a noble gift
Of gems and jewels greets me with esteem.
But all the same his growing sins bid fair
To bring about his ruin, neck and crop.
The fates now furious drag him to his fall
Most certain, inch by inch : but for a while
I cannot leave his land which binds me fast.
As locked in jail, a captive cannot escape,
I have to live in Lanka till his sands
Of life are run, as time revolves its wheels.
O Vritra's victor, thou dost know full well
That Ravan hath a son named Meghanad :
All else but him have succumbed in the war.
If this arrogant prince, (performing rites
Of sacrifice at Nikumbhil), sustains his bow,
Ram, sure, will court disaster, dread and dire.
Beware of him, this son of Mandodari,
With whom with profit none can measure swords.
This prince transcends the virtues of his race,
As Garud other birds excels in might."
So saying, Lakshmi, Vishnu's charmer fair,
Paused, as a gentle lute which thrilled the heart
With music and its modes and tunes is hushed.
Enraptured by her voice, the gods (like birds
In spring, enchanted by the cuckoo's notes)
With eyes astonished gazed, as in a trance.
Responded Indra thus, " Except the lord of world
Supreme, in danger Raghav who can save ?
Resistless, mother, is that Ravan's son
In war. The snake dreads not the vulture more,
Than I do dread this doughty Titan prince.
The mighty hero quelled by dint of arms
The thunder which had crumbled Vritra's head

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To dust :—for which they call him Indrajit.
He conquers all, by virtue of a boon
Received from fire. Hence, goddess, thy advice,
So sound, I crave at this most critical hour.
Should I, thy bondsman, hie to Shiva's land ?"
Fair Lakshmi, spouse of Vishnu, Ocean's child,
Responded thus, " O Indra, hasten to Kailash
Where dwells the Lord Supreme who holds
The crescent on the head and represent
Thy case to him. The Earth, the virgin chaste,
Unable to sustain the load of sins
Is ever weeping :—this, the Lord shall know.
Fail not to tell him that the god of snakes,
Lord Ananta himself is quite fatigued.
The tottering world itself shall pass away,
If Ravan do not perish, root and branch.
Put this my case to him as well, I bid,
" Lord Shiva loves his daughter Lakshmi much
Who long ago Vaikuntha left and now
Resides in Lanka, mourning day and night
Alone. Why should the sapient lord who wields
Around his head thick, knotted hair forget
So soon, his unoffending Lakshmi dear ?
And why should he divide her from her lord ?
Pray, doth this act become her noble sire ?"
So saying, quick departed Vishnu's spouse
(With waving locks). Anon, from welkin high
She dropped. It seemed as if an image, bright
And golden, lighting with its splendid rays
The water limpid, sank beneath the stream.
Matali brought a car for Indra's use.
The god of heaven, attended by his spouse,
Thus softly whispered in her ears aside,

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"O goddess, bear me company, I pray.
The wind is valued twice for fragrance' sake:
The stalk is valued for its lotus sweet:
And I, for thee, my love!" Her husband's words,
So soothing, moved her to a smile: she held
His hand and gaily rode upon the car
Which soon alighted at the golden gates
Of paradise that opened of themselves.
The car divine emerged and graced the sky
With light resplendent, spreading far and wide,
Which stirred the world that thought the sun was up:
The raven cawed: and coo-ed the other birds
And poured forth melody in currents sweet:
The groves resounded with a matin song:
The house-wife, much ashamed to find herself
In bed so long, rushed out, her duties to perform.

Near Manas-lake, the glowing Kailash-peak
Displayed its beauties wild. Its top was crowned
With Shiva's dwelling, as with peacock's plume
The head of deity Krishna is adorned.
The summit laved by water gushing out
From springs appeared as if it was besmeared
With sandal paste, and teemed with golden flowers.
Alighting from his car divine in haste,
God Indra travelled with his spouse on foot
And thus attained the home supreme of bliss,
Where, seated on a golden throne, sublime,
As Queen of queens, the goddess Gouri reigned.
Vijaya moved the chowrie: Jaya held
The royal parasol. The poet fails

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To sketch the superb beauties of a place,
Which to a thoughtful person may appeal.
With reverence and esteem the godly pair
Adored the feet of Gouri, goddess great,
(Emblem of primordial energy),
Who blessed them both and said, "O lord of heaven,
How farest thou? What message dost thou bring
To-day, attended by thy handsome spouse?"
To her, with clasped hands, the thunderer thus,
"O goddess, what is hidden from thy view?
Dread Lanka's lord, impatient of the war
(That rages in his country, day and night)
And hostile to the gods, installs again
Prince Meghanad as general supreme
Of his Titanic force, at break of day.
The gallant prince, the terror of his foe,
Will worship Fire, his favourite god, from whom
He hopes to get a boon before he fights.
Fair Lakshmi, royal grace of Rakshas' race,
In person brought to me this news and said,
"The Earth laments. This damsel chaste, alas!
Is groaning 'neath her heavy load of sins.
Ananta, too, her prop, is quite fatigued.
About to leave fair Lanka, land of gold,
The goddess Lakshmi did enjoin on me
(Her slave) to run on errand to Kailash
And lay the news before thy blessed feet.
O nymph (whose grace maintains the famished world),
The hero Ram is favoured of the gods.
But none among the gods sustains a might

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Which may prevail in war with Ravan's son.
The Raksha, by his power, the thunder quelled,
The world-destructive weapon, mother great:
And hence they call him Indrajit the brave.
O goddess, pray, adopt a plan to shield
The virtuous Ram: for, sure, without thy grace,
The prince's might shall rid the world of Ram."
The goddess answered, "Nikasha's son, the first
In Shaivas' list is favoured of the god
Who holds the trident. How can possibly I
Think ill of him, O Indra? Shiva lord,
The best of ascetics, is absorbed in Yog;
No time he hath to think of Lanka's weal:
Which, thus neglected, pines from day to day."
With folded hands thus Indra made reply,
"Rebellious e'er to the gods above
Accomplished villain most is Rakshas' lord.
I vastly wonder how this patent fact
Fails to excite thy ire, O mountain's child.
The wretch abducted Sita, spouse of Ram,
A noble prince who, led by pious thoughts,
Maintains his father's vow and so disdains
His kingdom with its pomp and roams at will
Through woods in beggar's guise from place to place.
He sacrificed the joy and glory of his court
And sole preserved this precious gem, his spouse,
On whom he set a store above the world.
By practice of deceitful means the wretch
Secured his end and fetched the damsel home.
The thought of this abduction makes my blood
With anger boil. By virtue of a boon
Which from the trident-holder he obtained,

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He wields abnormal strength. Hence, wantonly
He flouts the gods and loves his neigbours' wives.
I cannot, for the life of me, make out
O goddess, how the knave deserves thy grace !"
God Indra paused and Shachi in a voice,
Like lute melodious, next thus began :—
" Ah ! who with Sita will not sympathise ?
For, day and night, she weeps in Ashok-woods,
As mourns in cage a bird, the friend of groves.
Acute must be the agony the nymph
Secluded from her husband feels, alas —
A fact well known to thee. And but thyself
Who can that erring knave chastise on earth ?
O goddess great, contrive to bring about
The fall of Meghanad, his valiant son,
And thus restore to Ram his lovely spouse.
This shall remove the blot, the foul dis-grace,
Which mars my pride and stains my husband's fame
I almost die of shame when people say,
The Raksha hath subdued the god of heaven."
Fair Gouri laughed and said, "O chief of gods,
And Shachi, goddess, fairest of the fair,
Ye have a grudge against the Raksha king.
No wonder, then, that ye, conjugal pair,
Conspire against the life of Meghanad,
His son beloved, hope of Rakshas' race.
Ye both entreat me Lanka to destroy,
The land of gold. But this I cannot do.
For Rakshas' race is shielded by my lord :
And none but him can fulfil your desire.
That god whose symbol is the mighty bull
Is now absorbed in Yog on summit high.

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The peak called Yogasan obscured by clouds
Is most appalling, cut off from the world,
Where Shiva in seclusion sits to pray.
Presumptuous Indra, fondly dost thou hope
To see the lord where Garud cannot soar?"
The son of Aditi responded thus :-
Mother of all, redemption's only source,
Except thy gracious self, who can presume, I say,
To face the foe of Tripur steeped in yog?
Destroy the force of Rakshas, mighty nymph,
And thus sustain the sinking, groaning world.
Maintain the cause of virtue and relieve
The load of earth; compose the prince of snakes
Who wields the earth and thereby Raghav shield."
The demons' foe adored the goddess thus
And bent his head: anon the blessed land
Was filled with fragrance: and the conches' sound
With other notes auspicious struck the ear.
A chorus of melodious birds, it seemed,
A song sang sweetly in a distant grove.
As if by talismanic force impelled,
The throne of gold vibrated, off and on.
To Vijaya, her mate, thus Gouri spake,
"Diana-faced nymph, just let me know
Which saint in distress thus adores my feet
And wherefore?" Drawing lines with suited spells,
On floor with chalk, Vijaya smiling said,
"O mountain's daughter, Raghav thee adores.
By calculations I observe that Ram
Hath painted with vermilion thy feet,

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To which with folded hands in religious zeal
Blue lotus-flowers and water from the jar
He offers. Cheer him up, O goddess : save
The gem of Raghu's race, Kaushalya's son,
Who is devoted to thy service, heart and soul."
The Queen of queens was moved, came down in state
And thus addressed her mate, the damsel chaste:—
"O Vijaya, greet thou the pair divine :
For I proceed to Yogashan, the peak
Whereon my husband prays." With elephant's gait
She passed and entered her recess of gold.
Vijaya fair, as bid by Gouri, dealt
A warm reception to the pair divine.
She used decorous words to cheer them up,
Provided thrones and last their tastes regaled
With remnants of celestial offerings sweet.
Fair Jaya came and decked the queen of heaven
With wreaths that glowed like stars in welkin high :
Her locks she graced with flowers, fresh and gay.
In orchestra, the singers' band appeared :
Amain, on every side (with merry tunes).
The music flourished : sang the damsels fair :
The land Kailash was tranced : the world was charmed.
And as the gentle music reached the earth,
The child asleep, enraptured by the note,
Smiled in his mother's lap with closed eyes :
The nymph, by love and sleep forsaken, thought
Her gallant crossed the threshold of her house.
The cuckoo paused in grove : the ascetic rose,

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Deluded by a dream his favourite god
Was come at last to grant the boon desired.
As she her recess entered, Gouri chaste
Began to ponder how to make a plan
To greet her lord. Revolving in her heart
Awhile, she hit upon a suited scheme
To give effect to which she called in mind
Nymph Rati. In a grove with Kam, her lord,
The damsel with the most bewitching grace
Was flirting gaily. There the fragrant wind
Began to blow, as flows a gentle stream
And gave the cue, as bid by Gouri fair.
The heart of Rati danced, and like a lute
Vibrated, when the fingers touch its chords.
Anon she dashed with speed along the sky
And reached the Kailash-peak and graced the feet
Of Gouri, as the lotus in its bloom
In pond, at day-break, meekly bends its head
Before the dawn, the herald of the sun.
The goddess smiling blessed the spouse of Kam
And said, "My lord who heads the ascetics' band
Is deep absorbed in Yog. I would disturb
His rites. But, how, O nymph, pray let me know."
Thus queried, Rati crowned with graceful lock
Responded saying, "Pose, O goddess fair,
As world's enchantress, if thou please. With gems
And trinkets bright, I mean to deck thy frame.
Thy superb grace shall lead the god astray
And fill his heart with raptures, as the wood

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Adorned with verdant plants and blooming flowers
Delights the king of seasons, jolly spring !"
So saying Rati combed her shapely head
And rendered bright and smooth her tresses gay.
With scrupulous care her toilet next she made
With aid of jewels non-pariel and gems,
And diamonds rare, and incense most refined,
And musk, sandal-paste and filaments of flowers,
And saffron and embroidered garb of silk,
Effulgent like the gem. The fair-eyed nymph
With pleasure dyed her feet with lac.
The mountain's daughter, thus adorned, appeared
As charmer of the world. Like polished gold
Her grace redoubled. In the glass the nymph
Beheld her splendid face which beamed like moon :
So in the limpid stream, the lotus views
Its bloom. The goddess smiled and said,
Addressing Rati, "Call thy husband here."
The nymph invoked him, as the cuckoo calls
The spring. Impatient rushed in haste
The god of love with floral bow, as runs
A stranger when abroad he hears with joy
The touching music of his native land.
Parvati said, "O Cupid, I intend
To see the prince of ascetics in his Yog.
My child, attend me to that place, I bid."
Though Kam is ever jolly, the goddess' word
Unnerved the god, who fell at Gouri's feet
And thus responded, "Why O goddess, thou
Thy humble bondsman, thus commandest, pray ?

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Fear kills me, mother, almost, when I think
Of happenings past. With Daksha sore displeased
For his mis-dealings foolish, goddess, bear in
mind,
Thy body thou didst quit in days of yore,
And, later on, wast born as child of Himalaya.
Dejected deep, the author of the world
Renounced the cumbrous burden of its rule
And bent on prayer to the woods repaired.
I was by Indra bid to interrupt
The god of gods absorbed in trance divine.
O goddess, in an evil hour I hied
To that forbidden place where Shiva prayed.
I knelt and aimed an arrow at the god.
The moment wretched how I curse : for, look!
The fire which dwells in Shiva's forehead broad
In fury rushed and encompassed my frame.
O mother, how my language can describe
The burning pain I felt? I raised a howl,
And to the rescue summoned Indra, god,
The sun, the moon in vain. To ashes, quick
I was reduced. The thought of this affair,
So tragic, fills my heart with fear
And wild dismay. Forgive me, therefore, pray."
The goddess Gouri smiling cheered his heart
And said, "O Cupid, fear not in the least.
E'er victor by my boon, a wanton mood
Adopt and follow in my wake. The fire
Which in an evil hour consumed thy frame
(With quenchless, burning flashes) shall to-day
Adore thy feet. The venom which destroys
One's life assumes in time the form
Of life-preserving nectar through the skill

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Of science," Bowing at her feet god Kam
Addressed her thus :—"The person whom, O nymph,
Thou holdest out exemption in the world
From danger is secure and knows no fear.
I venture, though, to make before thy feet
A meek submission. Mountain's daughter how
Canst thou in this enchanting garb advance ?
The lovely sight of thy transcendant grace
Shall in a moment madden all the world.
The good shall bring forth evil, I avow.
When gods and demons churned the ocean deep
And thus attained the nectar, tooth and nail
The demons fought to wrest it from their foe.
Anon, dis-guised as world's enchantress fair,
Appeared Lord Vishnu at this critical time.
The result was electric, for the world
Enchanted by his form and, later on,
Perturbed by floral arrows which I showered
In quick succession, promptly lost its head.
In quest of nectar of the lips, the gods
And demons nectar of the sea ignored.
The braid of hair which hung upon his back
With charming windings shamed the coiled snake.
The height attractive of his rising breast
Abashed the Mandar mount which ceased to roll
And paused. The idea makes me smile, O nymph.
If gold unreal so much charms the eye,
How lovely must then be the genuine gold ?"
The goddess there-upon with skill divine
Created rays fictitious, bright like gold,
With which she screened herself from public view,

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As when the sun goes down, the lily fair
Adopts a veil around its lunar face;
Or as the flame of fire in ashes steals
And dwindling hides itself, or as the moon,
Fades from the sight, when crossed by Rahu's
wheels.

The smiling goddess graceful like the dawn
Obscured by clouds, through gates of ivory
Emerged from her recess,—her steps pursued
By Cupid who sustained the floral bow
And carried likewise on his back the case
Of arrows floral keen. Attended by the god,
The goddess seemed as if a lotus bloomed
Among the thorns abounding in the stem.

The Kailash is surmounted by a peak
Called Yogashan, most dreadful to the view :—
The peak which humming bees in swarms
Frequent. The goddess with a grace which charms
the world
In queenly state and pomp alighted there.
The roaring waters pent-up in the caves
Were silenced by her gentle, gracious steps :
Her presence hushed the elements, rude and wild,
As Lull subdues the sea. The clouds dispersed
Like gloom before the smiles of merry dawn.
The nymph before her eyes beheld the lord
Besmeared with ashes, and with eye-lids closed,
Unconscious of the world, absorbed in Yog :
And with a smile she thus accosted Kam :
"Waste not a moment more, O Shambar's foe :
But to thy task at once : and smartly aim
Thy floral arrow". Kam whose badge is fish,

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Directed by the nymph, knelt on the ground,
Held tight the bow and pulled the twanging string
And aimed at Gouri's lord the arrow keen
Which people call Enchantment. Dart in hand,
The deity wounded gave a start; his hair
In knots that thickly clustered round his head
Shook, off and on: as on the top of hills,
Disturbed by earth-quake with a terrible din,
The row of trees indulge in frantic dance.
The lord was perturbed: and the Fire that graced
His forehead was ablaze and loudly roared.
The frightened Cupid quickly beat retreat
And in the goddess' bosom hid himself:
As when the thunder roars and lightnings flash
Like sparks of fatal fire, the lioness' cub
Affrighted crouches to its dam's embrace.
Lord Shiva glanced, and got up from his seat:
And Gouri laid aside her magic guise.
Enchanted by her beauty Shiva thus began;
"O mother of Ganesh, pray why alone
I find thee in this lonely place to-day?
Where is the king of beasts, thy faithful slave?
And where hath thine attendant Jaya gone?
And where is Vijaya?" Her features beamed
With gentle smiles and this response she made :-
"Ignoring me, thy servant meek, my lord,
O king of ascetics, long thou dwellest here:
And this is why I rush to greet thy feet.
No woman chaste, attended by her maids,.
Proceeds to tryst her lord The ruddy goose
Alone at day-break greets her parted mate,

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Who rules her heart." And at her words
The god, with smiles complacent, on a seat
Of tiger-hide enthroned the goddess fair.
At once the flower in all directions bloomed;
And maddened by the fragrance rushed the bee
In quest of nectar; blew the Malay breeze;
The cuckoo, prince of birds, exultant cooed.
And flowers (with dews besprinkled) rained profuse,
Which hid the peak. On Gouri's bosom high,
Asylum best adapted to the god of love,
He smartly bent his bow which gave a twang.
With arrows which in quick succession flew,
He framed a lattice. Shiva, thus ensnared,
And steeped in pleasure which the senses bring
Was rendered frantic with the joy of love,
When Rahu in the shape of shame eclipsed the moon,
And smiling Fire, in embers, hid his frame.
The lord assumed a lovely form which charmed
The sweet enchantress whom he thus addressed
"I know what passeth in thy heart, my love:
I know why Indra with his spouse hath come:
I know full well why Raghav thee invokes
Before the proper time. In me the faith
Of Ravan is unbounded; but the load
Of sins unwieldy which he ever bears
And grows from day to day shall bring him down—
A fact which grieves my heart and makes it burst.
For fates' decree nor god nor man can change.
Despatch the god of love to Indra quick,

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With orders to proceed to Maya's place,
By whose benignant favour Lakshman brave
Shall slay the hero Meghnad." Cupid ran,
As flies the prince of birds from off his nest
With lingering glances at his happy home.
In masses clouds of bright and golden hue,
Exhaling perfume with a stream of flowers
Named jasmine, lotus, lily, parijat,
And white-rose (courted by the gentle breeze)
Encircled Shiva and the goddess fair.
We turn to Kam now. At the threshold bright
Constructed with the milk-white ivory,
Nymph Rati with a face that shamed the moon
In point of grace, dejected, took her stand.
Her husband missing, she was shedding tears.
But to her joy, the friend of merry spring,
The god of love appeared and clasped the nymph
With arms extended wide and cheered her heart.
Her tears were rendered dry, as dews of night
That grace the lotus fade at break of day.
As in the month of merry March the doves,
A lovely pair, enraptured, join their bills,
The nymph (rejoiced to find her treasure dear
Restored to her) with kisses pressed his lips
And said, " Thy rapid advent, O my love,
Bestowed on me a lease of life renewed.
I can't describe how anxious did I feel
To miss thee long. For when I call to mind
The past with all its tragedy combined,
I shiver at the awe-inspiring name
Of Shiva, holder of the dart, a god
Inclined to injure others, most unkind.
I charge thee in my name, O lord of life,

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To shun the god in future." With a smile
Serene and armed with five-fold arrows keen
Responded Cupid, "Harboured by the shade,
Who dreads, my pretty love, the solar rays ?
Now let us run in haste to Indra's place."
And saying this he quickly bent his steps
To where sat Indra on a golden throne :
And bowing low he gave the god the news
Desired. And, in a trice, the king of gods
A chariot mounted and with furious speed
He drove to Maya's region. Rushed the steed
Like fire effulgent through the azure sky :
The mane vibrated on his graceful head ;
The rattling wheels in motion pierced the clouds.
The god provided with a thousand eyes,
Anon, alighted at the destined place
Where Maya held her sway. Forthwith the god
His car withheld and, walking briskly on,
The temple entered. Who can ever sketch
The beauty of the fane ? Upon a golden throne
Constructed with the rays of sun, the nymph
(Primeval energy), before whose spell
The world enthralled, subdued, submissive bows,
Incarnate sat. With folded hands the god
Inclined his head and said, "Thy slave is here
Thy blessings to receive, O charmer of the world."
The goddess blessed the god and queried thus,
"What brings thee here, O Indra ?" Thus the god,
"At Shiva's instance I adore to-day
Thy gracious feet. Pray tell thy bondsman here,
(My humble self), by what device and skill,

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To-morrow Lakshman warrior shall defeat
The son of Ravan. By thy grace, O nymph,
(So bade lord Shiva), in a hideous fight,
At day-break Lakshman brave shall put to death
The hero Meghnad." Pondering for a while,
The goddess answered thus :—" O lord of sky,
In days of yore when Tarak demon vile
Defeated thee in war and conquered heaven,
Parvati bore a son (the harbour of the world)
Whom Krittikas most fondly reared in arms :
This child is Kartik, general of the gods.
The lord whose symbol is the bull, himself
A weapon forged with Rudra's valorous might.
Observe, O god, the shield adorned with gold :
And there the sword which harbours death itself.
And there behold a quiver dread, and ever full
Of arrows pointed, as the world of snakes
With hissing reptiles teems. Look at the bow."
God Indra gently smiled to see the grace
Of that eternal bow and thus replied,
" My bow, though decked with gems, is wholly trash
Beside that bow. Like halo of the sun,
The glory of the armour blinds mine eye.
The sword is flashing like a flame of fire :
The quiver hath no match throughout the world,
Methinks, O mother." Spake the goddess thus,
"O Indra, list : by means of these bright arms
God Kartik put to death, in days of yore,
The demon Tarak vile : and, now be sure
They shall effect the death of Ravan's valiant son.
But, truly speaking, none in all the world
Can beat the warrior in an open fight

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By lawful means, so be he man or god.
Despatch these arms to Raghav's brother soon.
For Lanka I will start at break of day,
And shield the hero Lakshman in the fight.
Trace back thy steps to heaven. Now adieu!
And as Aurora, joy of flowers, will ope
The golden eastern gate with lily hands
Tomorrow, she shall render thee immune
From fear of Indrajit, the heroes' crown.
Thus shall thy terror never-ending fly:
And thus fair Lanka's lotus sun shall set."
With raptures Indra bowed and with the arms
He rushed to heaven direct and reached his home.
There in the godly council, on a throne
Of gold he sat and summoned Chitra-rath
And said, "Gandarvas' monarch, just proceed
To golden Lanka with these weapons bright.
By Maya's grace, Sumitra's son who heads
The list of heroes shall at break of day
Slay Meghanad, the Raksha prince. But how
All this will come to pass, the goddess kind
Herself shall let the valiant Lakshman know.
I pray thee, king, assurance give to Ram
That all celestials lend him warm support
And wish him well at heart. E'en Gouri's self
Takes up his cause today. My bosom friend,
Pray cheer him up and bid him not despond.
If Meghnad falls, his sire can't survive:
And Ravan dying, Ram shall get his spouse,
His loving Sita, back. Ascend my car
And start. And lest the Raksha might observe
Thy movements in his land and thus declare

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A war on thee, I just shall bid the clouds
The welkin to obscure. The god of wind
I shall command to loose his boisterous train
(The band of winds ferocious) for a while.
The lightning shall appear and wildly dance :
The sky I mean to rend with thunder's roar."
The hero Chitra-rath profoundly bowed
Before the feet of Indra and with care
Sustained the arms and dashed towards the earth.
The king of gods invoked the lord of winds
And said, " O god, a tempest cause to blow
In Lanka quick ; the winds confined release
Amain ; and let the clouds attend thee.
Pray, combat with the sea, thy foe, awhile ;
And raise a mighty howl". The god in glee
Advanced by leaps, (as bounds the king of beasts
Unfettered) to the gloomy caves of hills
In which imprisoned lay the winds, his train.
Afar, he heard a hideous din and saw
The hills vibrating with the pent-up force
Of winds the caves confined, as if not strong
Enough the violent captives to detain.
The wind-god opened wide the gates of rock ;
And with a mighty shout emerged the winds,
As shouts the ocean when the mound gives way.
The earth began to quake ; and howled the sea ;
And high as mountains breakers raised their head,
And battled bravely with the gallant winds :
The clouds in all directions moved ; and flashed
The lightning swift : and violent thunders roared.
The moon with stars, his bright attendants, flew ;

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The clouds obscured the land of Lanka fair
And bulged out heaps of fire: and with a clash
Tremendous, trees came down: a hurricane
blew;
The rains in torrents poured and swept the earth;
A deluge spelt the ruin of the world:
And rattling, clattering hails began to pour.
The Rakshas struck with panic ran in haste
To neighbouring houses. Chitra-rath the brave,
Anon, effulgent like the sun, in royal garb,
Alighted at the thres-hold of the camp
Of hero Ram. His graceful waist was decked
With golden belt which gleamed like zodiac bright;
A flashing sword was dangling from his belt.
No poet's pen can ever sketch the grace
Of diadem (bright and golden) on his head,
The godly quiver, shield and bow and dart
And glittering armour. Light divine suffused
The place and dazed the eye: and heavenly
scent,
Descending lightly, promptly filled the land.
With reverence bowing low before the feet
Of Chitra-rath, (god Indra's herald), Ram
Addressed him thus "Heaven's resident, god!
(For who can else such heavenly grandeur
wield ?)
I pray thee, tell thy humble servant here
The graceful Nandan woods why thou hast left
And with thy presence graced his modest camp
To day? Alas! I have no golden seat
To offer for thine use. But deign to sit
(If me, thy bondsman, thou wouldst favour show)
Upon the seat of holy grass and wash thy feet

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With water mixed with grass and sunned rice.
A better welcome how can I accord
(A wretched mendicant) to thee, my lord ?"
The herald blessed the hero, took his seat
On matting as desired, and thus began
" Pray list, O Ram : my name is Chitrarath :
I serve the lord of paradise and rule
The Gandarvas. By Jove's command, I come
To see thee here to day : and he and all the gods
Desire thy weal. O best of men, behold,
These weapons Indra to thy brother brave
Hath sent through me. And Maya, goddess chaste,
At day-break will appear herself and say
By what device and skill shall Lakshman brave
Effect the death of valiant Meghanad
To-morrow in the field. The nymph divine
(Who saves from dangers all) takes up thy cause,
O Raghav, favourite of the gods above !"
And him thus answered Ram of Raghu's line,
" O foremost of the Gandarvas ! To-day
My heart is steeped in sea of joy supreme,
To hear the tidings blessed from thy mouth.
How can a foolish mortal, I, in words
My gratitude to thee express enough ?"
To him with smiles responded Chitra-rath,
" Pay heed to me, O best of Raghu's race.
Man's gratitude to gods above consists
In truthfulness and self-control, and deeds
Of virtue, and relief of pain and want.
The gods despise the sandal and the flowers,
The silken cloth and other precious gifts,

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And presents made in course of sacrifice
By persons void of merits shown above :
And in a nutshell I have put to thee
The cream of ethics. Raghav, fare thee well!"
The hero Ram with reverence bent his head :
And Chitrarath his blessings offered prompt,
And riding on the car divine returned
To heaven. The storm was lulled : the sea was hushed.

And Lanka smiled to see the moon again
Attended by his myrmidons, the stars.
The moon-beam washed its bright and silver frame
In limpid stream : the merry lily smiled
With joy. The jackals which devour the dead
Came running to the field of fight once more.
Unnumbered vultures flew : and rushed the ghosts
Malignant, prompted by the thirst of blood.
The Rakshas armed with weapons dread, and led
By martial zeal, advanced to war again.

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BOOK III.

PRAMILA PROCEEDS TO LANKA TO MEET HER HUSBAND MEGHNAD.

In Pramod-grove secluded from her lord,
Pramila, Danav's child, was sorely grieved.
With streaming eyes she passed through groves and woods
With restless steps like Radha milk-maid fair,
In quest of Krishna clad in yellow silk
And playing on a flute but lost to view,
At Kadam's root. At times, the damsel sweet
Hied to the fane : but out she came at once,
As parted from her mate in helpless grief
A pigeon courts and shuns her empty nest
By turns. The summit of her mansion high,
At times she scaled and, far off, gazed intent
At Lanka, brushing with her garment's hem
The tears which all the while in torrents flowed.
The flute, the lute, the cymbal and the song
Were hushed : the drum was still : and by her side
Her comrades at her woe dejected moved,
As when the wood deserted by the spring
Begins to fade, the flowers, too decline.
The goddess Night approached the Pramod-grove,
When chaste Pramila gave a start and held
Her friend Vasanti by the neck, a nymph

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As lovely as the spring and weeping, thus
Addressed her in a sweet, melodious tone,
"O Vasanti, behold the gloomy night
Arrived to bite me like a fatal snake.
At this emergent moment, O my friend,
Where is my lord of life, the gallant prince
Who conquered Indra and subdued the foe?
Why is he missing still, pray let me know."
Then, cooing soft like cuckoo, friend of spring,
Vasanti spake :—" The cause of his delay
I do not know. But, cheer up, sweet, I pray.
For as soon as thy lord succeeds in war,
He can not but retrace his steps to thee.
Tush! Fear thou not: my friend, take heart of grace.
For none can quell a hero who defies
All possible weapons wielded by the foe,
So be he angel, demon, man or god.
Let both of us proceed to yonder grove
And pluck the flowers and weave a wreath to deck
Thy lover's neck, as in the field of war
The flag of conquest crowns the victor's car!"
Thus speaking softly, they, the forest dense
Together entered, where the moon-beam gay
Was sporting in the pond and thus rejoiced
The heart of pretty lily: hummed the bee:
The cuckoo cooed; and bloomed the merry flower.
A row of fire-flies graced the charming grove
Like gems which deck a damsel's swarthy hair.
The Malay gently blew: and rustled leaves.
Full many a fragrant flower the damsels picked:
And dew-like tears which trickled from the eyes

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Of sweet Pramila mingling with the flowers,
In fair abundance, gained the grace of pearls.
The sun-flower, later on, she saw afar,
Dejected quite without her lord, the sun :
And standing by her side, she thus began
In gentle terms : "O darling of the sun,
My fate resembles thine in every way.
For both of us are victims of the night
Appalling, grim and dark ; and both of us
Secluded from our lovers pine in grief.
The world is getting dark before mine eyes
Accurst ! That sun whose beaming face produced
Unceasing sparks of life in me, alas !
Hath gone to rest. But shall I see my love,
As thou, by grace of dawn, thy love shalt meet?"
The chaste Pramila heaved a sigh of grief
And next her friend Vasanti thus addressed :
"Companion mine, behold, I culled with care
A heap of flowers and twined a garland gay.
But how may I adore him with this wreath
Which love hath toiled to make with hands combined ?
To Lanka, let us, then, in haste proceed ".
" But how," said Vasanti," can we, the land
Of Lanka enter, love, that is besieged
By Raghav's force, gigantic like the sea
Which none on earth could ever dare to cross ?
For hordes of hostile soldiers move about
With weapons,—grim like Yama armed with dart."
Pramila, Danav's daughter, much provoked,
To Vasanti, her friend, responded thus :—

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" What sayest thou, Vasanti ? If the stream
Her dwelling-house of mountain leaving, runs
To tryst the ocean, who can check on earth
Her course ? Am I the doughty Danav's child,
Of noble blood, allied by wedlock fair
To Meghanad, (the crown of Rakshas' race)
Begot by Ravan, terror of the world ?
Did not my husband quell god Indra's pride ?
And Raghav shall I dread, who lives on alms ?
His prowess, I defy : and, comrade, mark
To Lanka I will rush by dint of arms."
By these heroic thoughts impelled, the nymph
Indignant to the golden temple ran.
As when along with sacrificial steed
The hero Arjun reached with speed and dash
The land of women,—incensed at the sound
Of conches aptly styled the Deva-Dutt,
Amazons drew them out in battle array :—
So, when Pramila thus announced her will,
A violent trumpet beat around the place ;
The ladies whom the zeal of war inspired
Unsheathed the flashing sword and bent the bow
And flapped the sheath ; the golden armour glazed
And lighted all the land. In stables chargers roused
By ringing tinkling notes of anklets gay
Neighed loud and restless moved, as deadly snakes
Excited by the drum indulge in dance.
The elephant's trumpet deep benumbed the ear.
The notes combined called up the echo hid
In caves, or on the top of hills. The land
Resounded with a deafening din and yell.

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Nrimunda-malini, a haughty maid,
A hundred steeds in harness quick secured
From stables : and a hundred damsels fair
Rode on their back with flashing swords
Which rattled in their belts, the helmets bright
That decked their head, the braid of wealthy hair
Adorned with gems, that hung about the neck,
And darts in hand that looked like lotus stalks
Beset with thorns. The coursers neighed rejoiced,
As Shiva shouts with pleasure when he holds
Upon his breast the feet of Durga dread
Which trample down the demons dire in war.
The trumpet flourished ; started gods in heaven ;
The man on earth ; the snake in world below.
Pramila with a heart that knows no fear
Her toilet made with most scrupulous care.
The light of diadem flashed across her lock,
As rain-bow decks the crest of sombre clouds.
The lamp-black line which marked her fawnlike eyes
Appeared like lovely digits of the moon
That grace the brow of Durga, Shiva's spouse.
She cast a veil across her lovely breast
And tied a belt of gold around her waist.
She slung upon her graceful back the shield
And arrow-quiver that began to glow
Like halo of the sun which blinds the gaze.
With dangling, flashing sword, in scabbard bright
Concealed, she decked her thigh which beat in grace
The fair interior of a plantain tree.

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She grasped a dart and put on jewels bright.
Arrayed in coat of arms the damsel looked
Like Durga goddess in her golden garb
Preparing Mahish vile, her foe, to slay
Or Shumbha and Nishumbha in the war.
Like hags and female ascetics, (Gouri's band,)
The mounted female guards around her stood.
Herself, the fair one rode upon a mare
Called Vadava as valorous as the fire
Beneath the sea and rapid as the wind.
As deeply dins the thunder in the sky,
The damsel loudly thus addressed her mates :—
"Companions fair, my husband is to-day
In Lanka like a wretched captive held :
Or else how could the master of my life
Who curbed the might of Indra, lord of sky,
His faithful consort (me) forget so soon ?
Hence, list, my friends, it is my firm resolve,
(Becoming conduct of a hero's wife !)
To see my lord at hazard of my life.
We mean to smash our foe in battle field
And Lanka enter or, suppose we fall,
(If this is what the fates have pre-ordained)
In foeman' blood we will immerse ourselves :
A rule which ever guides the noble stock
Of Danavs brave from whom we trace our birth.
Our lips wield nectar and our eyes contain
The deadly poison. Is our lily-hand
Devoid of strength ? So let us quick proceed
To test the valour of the hero Ram,
And witness with our eyes the superb grace
Which lust excited in the bosom frail
Of husband's father's sister Shurpa-nakha,

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While she in wanton mood traversed the woods
Called Pancha-vati. Let us likewise see
The hero Lakshman. With the noose of snakes,
Bibhishan traitor let us fetter fast.
Like female elephants crushing wood of reeds,
We all will trample down the wretched foe.
Ye hold the aspect of the lightning bright;
So rush with lightning quickness to his camp."
The girls exultant raised a hue and cry,
As herds of elephants shout in merry spring.
And like the wild-fire which resistless moves
With wind, its friend, the damsel chaste advanced
Attended by her comrades. Lanka shook;
The ocean roared; the mad tornado rushed:
And heaps of dust in all directions flew
And took the form of clouds. But in the night
Can murky smoke eclipse the flame of fire?
For like a brand of fire Pramila passed,
Escorted by her gallant female band.
It took a long interval ere she reached
The western gate.—The damsels sounded at a time
A hundred conches, and with anger flushed
Pulled forth anon a hundred strings of bows.
A seismic jerk convulsed the earth: amain
The horseman gave a start: the charioteer,
The driver of the elephant, armed with goad,
With terror quailed, while stationed at their posts.
The shock affrighted princes on their thrones,
The birds in nests and ladies in their veil.
The lion in den excited gave a leap
Tremendous: marine animals struck with awe
And panic dived and passed to sea below.
The hideous Hanu, (son of wind) advanced:

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And, deep incensed, the hero roaring said :—
"Who are ye, people, come at dead of night
To court destruction ? For this gate is watched
By Hanuman whose very name sends forth
A thrill in Ravan's heart. Lord Ram himself,
The crown of Raghu's race, (with Lakshman brave,
His friend Bibhishan, me and others too
Most valiant) here is mounting guard.
What led you, monsters vile, to wield to-night
In wanton mood the guise of ladies fair ?
Magician wicked all these Rakshas are,
I know ; but magic by my might I quell :
My violent strokes dispel their crafty art."
Nrimunda lost her temper, bent her bow
And shouting answered : "Savage brute,
We charge thee, summon to this place, anon,
The lord of Sita. Thee, his slave, a thing
Too mean, we slight and do not touch. For know
The lioness with a jackal never fights.
We let thee go : so fly and save thy life,
Thou denizen of the woods. No purpose shall be served
By killing thee, a wretch beneath contempt !
Avaunt ! Thou ape, do promptly send to us
The hero Ram revered and Lakshman brave
And vile Bibhishan, blot on Rakshas' race !
Pramila fair, the spouse of Indra-jit,
(Chastiser of his foe) shall, by her might,
To-day fair Lanka enter, to adore
Her husband's feet. Fool, who can check her ?"
The fore-most of the heroes, Hanu dire,
Inspired by mighty wind, his sire, advanced

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And, frightened, at the head of ladies' band,
Beheld Pramila glaring like a flame
Of fire! A light that flashed like lightning graced
Her diadem; an armour bright adorned
Her person adding to its radiance. Look!
How beams ot sun combine with gleams of gem:
So glowed Pramila in her coat of mail.
Astonished Hanu thus began to think :—
"Surmounting ocean when I came apace
To Lanka, I beheld the goddess great,
(The hideous Kali) armed with sword and skull
And with a wreath of human heads adorned.
I witnessed Mandodari, Ravan's spouse,
And many a Raksha maid and matron chaste
(Who walked from house to house at night alone)
And passing fair like digits of the moon.
In Asok grove, the lotus of the race
Of Raghu, Sita mourning I beheld.
But grace like this is matchless, I confess.
Thrice blessed is Meghanad; for by the side
Of Megha (name-sake of the clouds) is boun
This lightning ever in the ties of love."
Reflecting thus a-while, Anjana's son
Exclaimed most loudly, (as the tempest roars,)
" My master Ram, the sun of solar race,
With slabs of rock the mighty ocean bound
As captive to his will, O damsels fair.
Anon with countless heroes he arrived
At land of Lanka. Ye are ladies frail!
What means, then, this adventure on your part
Why do ye thus provoke the hero Ram,
The sea of mercy, gem of Raghu's race,

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Who gave you no offence? What dost thou seek
At Raghav's hand, O mistress of the band?
Convey to me thy message, I beseech;
That I may go and lay it at his feet."
Replied Pramila in a gentle tone
Which sounded like a lute to Hanu's ears:—
"Though hero Rama is my husband's foe,
I will not fight with him on that account.
My lord who wields a lion's strength can match
The world entire, alone. Then why need I
His foes provoke? Nay, this is his affair.
Frail girls we are, indeed! But bear in mind,
The lightning flashing which enchants the eye
Proves fatal with its touch. With thee
I despatch there my herald who will speak
My message to thy lord. So, hero, quick."
Nrimunda, herald, hideous like the nymph
Who wields a wreath of skulls around her throat
With fearless steps advanced to meet the foe.
It seemed as if a boat equipped with sail,
Alone, on shore-less ocean gaily moved,
The waves defying: Hanu led the way.
The heroes gave a start, as to his feet
The owner springs to see his house on fire:
Which brought a smile of contempt to her lips.
The anklet and the girdle rang; and, armed
With spear acute, the handsome nymph advanced;
And with the keener weapons of her glance
She aimed a dart at peeping soldiers, round.
With peacock's plumage decked, the helmet bright
Danced gaily on her head. The jewels flashed,

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Which graced her rising breast. The braid of hair,
With grace of serpent, coiled about her back:
So Cupid's flag triumphant moves in spring!
Like elephant (female) in the prime of youth
The merry damsel passed and reached her goal,
As moon-beam lighting courts the limpid stream:
Or as Aurora hails, at break of day,
The mountain peak illumined by the sun.
There sat in camp the gem of Raghu's rāce;
And Lakshman stood behind him, (joining hands).
Beside him sat Bibhishan, Raksha grim,
And other heroes like the Rudras dread.
There worshippers devout with flowers suffused
The weapons gifted by the gods above,
Which Raghavites with care on shoulders bore.
Sweet perfume was consumed on incense-pots:
And row of lamps in all directions glowed.
Astonished all beheld the arms divine;
Part praised the scimitar; part, the golden shields
Which looked like clouds the setting sun illumes.
Part praised the quiver; or, the arrows bright.
The virtuous Ram sustained the bow divine,
And said. "At Sita's wedding, Shiva's bow
I brake; but, look, this bow I cannot bend.
How brother Lakshman shall perform the feat?"
A din profound like billow's mighty roar
Announcing Rama's success rent the sky.
The frightened warrior, Raksha Bibhishan,
Addressing valiant Rama thus began:—
"O best of heroes, look beyond thy camp.
Hath merry dawn alighted here to night?"

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Astounded all in that direction looked.
Bewildered Rama said, " O friend, behold !
A goddess or a witch ? For full of spell
Is Lanka. Magic here prevails supreme,
The source of which is Ravan juggler arch.
The secret of this talismanic craft
None else but thee can solve. In lucky times,
O Raksha good, thy presence I secured.
This feeble force of mine in danger here
In Lanka who but thee can ever save ?"
And as he spake, alighted at the camp
The herald led by Hanu. Joining hands
And bowing low, the nymph, as if the tunes
Incarnate in a chorus sang, spake thus,
" I bow before the feet of Ram and all
Respected heroes here. I, Nrimunda,
Bear message from my mistress Pramila,
The Danav's child, the spouse of Meghanad
Whose feats are famous." Dashrath's worthy son,
The damsel blessed and gently thus began,
" What message, speak O herald ? Let me know
The matter in detail. O graceful nymph,
What should I do to cheer thy mistress' heart ?"
The haughty damsel answered boldly thus :—
" O best of heroes, lord of Raghu's race,
Though many a Raksha perished at thy hands,—
My mistress solicits leave through me to say,
Make up thy mind to fight with her thyself,
Or let me pass to Lanka un-opposed ;
For there she means to greet her husband's feet.
A hundred war-like nymphs we number all
Who challenge thee to combat, one by one :

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So choose the one for purpose of the fight.
In art of wrestling, too, we are expert,
For which, or worse than that, we are prepared.
It matters not what weapon thou dost wield,
The bow, the shield, the dumb-bell or the sword :
Quick make thy choice, we can not brook delay.
For as a huntress with her might restrains
The female leopard, fearless, restless, wild,
About to pounce upon a herd af fawns
Whose sight inflames her passion, so the nymph,
Until she knows thy pleasure, holds her band."
The damsel, as she finished, humbly bowed,
As sprinkled round with dews, a blooming flower
Adores the gentle breeze with head inclined.
The lord of Raghu's race responded thus,
"I never pick a quarrel without a cause.
The king of Rakshas is my deadly foe,
Indeed ! But that alone can move me not
To measure swords with Raksha house-wives chaste,
Whom to preserve, a hero is by law
Of chivalry and honor ever bound.
For do I not belong to Raghu's line
Chivalric ? And thy mistress, too,
Is she not wedded to a hero's hand ?
Is not the suited pair, the wonder of the world ?
Go back and tell thy mistress, I beseech :—
A hundred times, I do admire her dash,
Devotion to her lord, the strength she wields.
And tell her too I give her passage free
And unopposed. My blessings please accept.

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What else can Raghav exile offer more ?"
So saying Hanu, he commanded thus,
"With courtesy oblige the ladies' band,
And let them pass to Lanka unopposed."
The herald prostrate-fell at Raghav's feet,
Her thanks expressed and parted. As she went,
Bibhishan smiled and spake to Ram, "my lord,
Come out and test Pramila's valour great.
A fun most curious just behold, I pray.
Who can subdue these Amazons who vie
With Durga dread that crumbled by her might
The Rakta-vijes ?" Answered Raghav thus,
"The herald's face, O prime of Rakshas race,
My spirit damped. I gave up in a trice
All thoughts of war. A fool, indeed, is he
Who thinks this tigress ever to incense.
Now let us go and see thy nephew's spouse
And feats performed by all her gallant train."
Amain the quarters four began to blaze.
The virtuous Raghav saw in smokeless sky
Above, a stream of rays which lighted up
With golden tinge the clouds. He heard the twang
Of rattling bows, the creak of rushing hoofs,
The shout, the clank of clashing swords which mixed
With sounds of concerts, trumpet and the band,
As waves of music, soft and indistinct,
With notes of tempests mingle in the air.
The flags unfurled displayed their gorgeous hues :
Excited chargers moved : to cap the globe,
The anklet, tinkling gently, soothed the ear.
Colossal as the hills, the force of Ram,

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Engrossed the right and left flanks, through which passed
The Raksha furies, with a shout of joy,
As through a valley, herds of elephants huge
Advance with glee and trumpet with their might,
And trample down the earth which shakes convulsed.
The rude Nrimunda armed with a flag
Of gold and mounted on a swarthy steed
The van escorted: next advanced the band
Of music led by girls who match in grace
On earth the Vidyadharis fair. The drum,
The lute, the cymbal gay, the merry flute
And other organs sweet, sent forth a note
Most pleasing to the sense, and in the rear,
Encircled by Amazons armed with darts
Advanced Pramila in her pomp and pride :—
So walks Diana bright among the stars !
Diamonds rare in all directions flashed
Like lightning. Armed with floral bow, passed on
The god of love above her in the sky,
With aim un-erring, darting, off and on,
His floral arrows. As the lion's back
Is graced by Durga valiant who subdued
The demon Mahish ; as the eagle's back,
By Rama, Vishnu's spouse ; as Airavat,
By Shachi, Indra's consort ; so the back
Of Vadava, the swiftest of her kind,
(Equipped with saddle bright, inlaid with gems)
Was fitly graced by Pramila the fair.
As if observing with supreme contempt

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The foe, the damsels marched : some bent the bow ;
n sallies some indulged with flashing swords,
On idly flapped the dart ; or laughed aloud
In mood sarcastic ; some in martial zeal,
Or led by lust, gave out a savage yell.
Addressing then the best of Rakshas, Ram
Spake thus, "O son of Nikasha, look there !
I heard not of an episode strange like this
In all my life. Pray, do I see awake
A thing I witnessed in the dream at night ?
O best of friends, reveal to me the truth
Which is a secret deep : for I confess,
The marvel yonder takes away my breath !
My friend, deceive me not. From Chitra-rath
I heard the goddess Maya would alight
To lend support to me, her bondsman here.
Pray, did the deity with the masquerade,
As we observe, perform a trick,
As she arrived at Lanka ? Do announce,
O sage, the author of the witch-craft strange."
To him Bibhisan thus : "No dream of night,
O lord of Sita, dost thou witness here.
There is a Danav famous in the world,
Kalnemi, foe of gods, whose daughter fair
Is Pramila, a damsel who hath sprung
From Durga's digits, vested with the might
Of that eternal goddess. In the world
In valour none the nymph excels.
As Kali crushes with her feet her lord,
The naked Shiva, so this charming lass
Subdues the lion Meghnad who hath quelled
In war god Indra of a thousand eyes,

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With thunder armed. For safety of the world,
God forged this chain, (Pramila); for she binds
The hero Meghnad, as fetters tie
The elephant, dripping ruts, who tramples down
With fury all that comes across his way.
As water poured in currents holds at bay
The wild-fire dread, the opponent of the woods,
This sweet enchantress curbs with lovely words
The fury of her lord. In currents deep
Of Yamna scented, as a mortal snake
Conceals its frame with joy, the gallant prince
In bosom of his mistress seeks repose :
Then, gods in heaven and snakes in land below
And men on earth in peace contented dwell."
Responded Raghav thus : -- Thy words are true :
O best of friends, the warrior Meghanad
Who drives with skill his chariot tops the list
Of heroes. Tactics in the world like his,
I swear, I never witnessed in the world.
Parashuram I saw,—in fight unmoved
Like mountain Bhrigu. But thy nephew, friend,
In moments most auspicious wields the bow.
How can I face this crisis grave, suggest,
O best of Rakshas : for the lioness dread
Hath met the terrible lion in the woods :
Which spells disaster to the herd of fawns!
Against a sea of perils, surging high,
I had to struggle fiercely, day and night.
But now the venom burns and lends to it
A greater force. So, to the rescue, friend.
Protect my helpless army, as the god
Adorned with blue neck, Shiva, Gouri's lord,
Preserved the world oppressed in ages past.

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Reflect, O hero, like a fatal snake,
Thy brother Ravan wields a deadly might :
And Indra's victor is his mortal fang,
Which, if removed by methods, fair or foul,
Shall crush the snake and yield the fruit desired :
Or sure in vain the mighty sea I bound
And toiled to come to Lanka, land of gold!"
Sumitra's son adored his brother's feet
And bowing said, "O best of Raghu's race,
Why should I dread the Raksha vile at all?
Befriended by the gods above, we bear
A charmed life and flout the foe. Take heart:
To weapons pointed which I mean to aim,
The son of Ravan, sure, shall fall a prey.
A regular villain is the Rakshas' lord:
And as ordained by law divine, the son
Shall suffer for his father's sins. His days
Are therefore numbered. Bear in mind, besides,
What Chitra-rath hath said about his fall."
Bibhishan answered, "Aptly hast thou said,
O best of heroes. virtue shall prevail:
And for his father's sins, the son shall pay.
But still beware; for valiant is his spouse;
And war-like is Nrimunda like the nymph,
The hideous Durga, decked with human skulls
Around her neck. Nay, one who ever dwells
Beside a lioness hiding in the woods
Must needs be on one's guard. For no one knows
On whom the beast may make an onset fierce."
The gem of Raghu's race addressed his friend,
Bibhishan thus; "O Raksha good, be pleased
(Attended by my brother) to proceed

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To each and every gate and find it out
Which hero mounteth guard and how. My host
Is quite exhausted with the combat last
With brave Virvahu. Watch with vigilance, please
How Angad, hero Neel, my bosom friend
Sugriva mount their guards. The western gate
With bow in hand, in person I will keep."
Bibhishan forthwith to his order bowed,
And as he passed with Lakshman to his goal,
He looked like Indra, king of gods, combined
With Kartik, Tarak's foe, or like the sun,
The lord of day, conjoined with nectar's source,
The moon.—Pramila, on the other hand,
Alighted soon at Lanka's golden gate.
Both horns and trumpets blowing raised a peal :
And crowds of Rakshas roared like Pralay clouds
Or like a herd of elephants in the woods.
Brave Virupaksha armed with iron-shafts ;
The Raksha Kala-Jangh, with club in hand,
As tall as palm-tree : and with looks on fire
Pramatta at the gate were sore alarmed.
The elephants roared ; the spirited chargers neighed ;
The wheels in motion rattled ; spearmen rude
Their darts with violence flapped ; and arrows flew
To heavens thick and thus obscured the moon ;
The sky inflamed was filled with din and smokes.
In panic Lanka shook, as quakes the earth,
When fierce volcanoes bulge out flames of fire,

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With rumbling, thundering noise at dead of night.
Aloud exclaimed Nrimunda hideous thus,
"At whom, O coward, dost thou aim thy blow
In darkness ? We are Rakshas' wives, behold,
And not their foe." At once the warder held
The bar and pulled it with his might and main.
The gates flew open with a deafening note
Like that of thunder : and the beauties rushed
To Lanka with a shout of triumph loud.
As at the glowing flames of fire with glee
The insects rush, the citizens running came.
The house-maids blew auspicious sounds and rained
In all directions flowers : the bards in joy
Sang hymns and played on music, soft aud sweet.
Like wild-fire in the woods, the ladies rushed :
And skilled like Vidya-dharis lasses fair
On flute and cymbal, drum and violin played,
In orchestra : the chorus charmed the ear.
The horses galloped brisk and neighed aloud :
The sword in clabbard clanked : and with a start
The child, asleep in mother's lap, awoke.
The maids, the windows of their houses oped,
And with Pramila's courage deep impressed
Rejoiced at heart, Anon, the damsel fair,
Pramila, flushed with pride and led by love,
Alighted at the gates of Meghnad's tower,
And sought and wooed her husband's company
With fond endearment, as a snake secures
The gem it lost and puts it on its head.

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Observing his beloved spouse,—with glee
Thus Indra's victor, terror of his foes,
Began,—"O damsel graceful like the moon,
Thine advent calls to mind Parvati's feats
Who put to death the Rakta-vijes vile,
And, crowned with victory, landed at Kailash.
And if thou bid me, Gouri number two,
A sworn vassal thine, my humble self,
Shall roll for ever at thy feet adored."
The damsel, flattered, smiled and answered thus,
"My lord, though by the grace of holy dust
Thy feet annoint, I may subdue the world,
Yet not the god of love before whose bow
I bend my head. I slight the weapon's spark,
But not the fire which tortures sore my heart,
While parted from the partner of my life.
This makes me hasten to my gracious lord,
As runs a wanton stream to join the sea."
With this remark the princess in a trice
The mansion entered, and disrobed herself
Of coat of arms, and wore the bodice bright
And vest of silk with hem in-laid with gems.
The girdle graced her waist; the pearls, her breast;
A wreath of diamonds decked her stately neck;
A line of stars adorned her parted hair;
Fine ear-rings decked her face: and gems, her lock:
With trinkets flashing, thus she decked herself,
And looked like queen of beauty, at whose sight
Prince Meghanad, the crown of Rakshas race,
Was steeped in joy profound. A golden seat

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Enthroned the happy pair. The minstrels sang :
The dancers tripped with measured steps and slow
Like Vidya-dhars whose skill the gods admire :
Enchanted by the music, birds in cage
Their woe-ful plight ignored and softly coo-ed.
Melodious currents rose, as swells the sea
Attracted by the moon : and vernal winds,
In dulect whispers, blew in merry mood
Which they adopt when Spring, the seasons' king,
Secluded, coquets with the verdant woods.
Bibhishan, on the other hand, advanced
With Lakshman sturdy to the northern gate,
And there, un-moved in war like Vindhya-peaks,
Sugriva and his retinue mounted guard.
The eastern gate was watched by dreadful Neel :
In vain the goddess Sleep adored him there.
Prince Angad, fearless, watched the southern gate,
As roves a lion hungry for his prey ;
Or armed with spear as Nandi at Kailash.
Unmeasured heaps of smoke-less fire burnt
In all directions ; mid-way, Lanka gleamed,
As shines the moon among the stars in heaven
Transparent ; and four-fold adamant gates,
The heroes guarded with a watchful eye,
As by the grace of rains when standing crops
In fair abundance thrive from day to day :—
Beside the field, the cautious farmers build
A platform high and thereon vigil keep
To scare away the fawns, the buffaloes dread,
And other beasts subsisting on the grass.
With this inspection pleased, the heroes both
Returned to Rama's camp and rested there.

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On Kailash-peak, the goddess Gouri fair
Addressed Vijaya thus; "At Lanka look, my mate
Attractive like the moon, with ladies' band,
Pramila rushes in her armour bright.
And as the gleam of mail ascends the sky,
Astonished hero Raghav, best of men,
His friend Bibhishan, Lakshman, archer brave,
And other warriors look and rub their eyes.
Such beauty is but rare in mortal world!
For I assumed this martial form to slay
The demons, dread and vile, in golden age.
Pray, listen to the din and deafening twang,
As the excited lady shouts and bends
Her bow colossal. Mark how dances there
The diadem which crowns her chignon curved.
Through graceful movements of her gallant steed,
The damsel sinks and rises, as by waves
The lily golden in the Manas-lake
Is tossed." Her maid Vijaya thus replied :—
"O golden nymph, thy words are true; I know,
Such grace is rare and matchless in the world.
Thy servant Pramila, the Danav's child,
Hath valour most astounding, this I own.
Brave Indrajit of mighty arms alone
The world can win with ease. But now behold:
A new ally, his spouse, hath joined his force,
As Fire combines with Breeze, his friend in need.
The hands of Meghnad being strengthened thus,
How, goddess, wilt thou make thy promise good,
And shield both Ram and Lakshman in the war?"
Reflecting for a while. the wife of Shankar thus,

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Responded, "Through my digits hath been born
Pramila fair whose might and matchless grace,
Reflections of myself, Vijaya, list,
I will retract, as day begins to break.
As gem which borrows lustre from the sun
Grows dim at night, she shall forfeit her charms.
The prince shall die and come up to Kailash
Attended by his bride and serve my lord.
His lovely spouse shall serve me as my maid."
Predicting thus the goddess Gouri, chaste,
Her temple entered. Then with gentle steps
The goddess sleep approached the blessed home
Of Shiva lord : and people lay at rest,
Immune from care on soft and floral beds.
The lunar digits graced god Shankar's brow,
And silver light diffused throughout the land.

———

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BOOK IV.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN SITA AND SARAMA.

Thy lotus feet I court, O prince of bards,
Saint Valmiki that gem-like crownst our land.
As dogs the movements of a mighty king
A wretched pauper bent on pilgrimage,
So bondsman thine, in quest of fair renown,
Thy heels I shadow on the sands of time.
Full many a pilgrim treading, day and night,
The path carved out by thee, hath conquered death,
The spectre grim (who rules with iron hand
The world) and entered thus fame's golden fane
Without a hitch. I name the worthy bards
As follows :—Bhartrihari, poet famed :
The savant Bhavabhuti : Kalidas,
(The favoured child of muse and nature's pet) :
The gifted Krittivas, the glory of Bengal :
And Murari whose verses like the flute
Of Krishna ever fill the heart with joy.
Along with swans in muse's merry pond
How may I gambol, sire, untrained by thee ?
With care collecting flowers from the grove
Of poesy (which thou didst plant,) to weave
Fresh garlands I intend and deck our tongue.
With all my efforts I am bound to fail,
Unless thou give me gems, O mine of wealth :
I pray for mercy meekly at thy hands.

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The golden Lanka wreathed with lamps of gem,
And vie-ing with an empress finely decked
With price-less garlands round her stately neck,
Was floating on a stream of raptures smooth.
Sweet music was performed in every house
By expert bands : while dancers gaily tripped.
The lovers met and flirted, side by side,
With arched smiles which ever graced their lips,
Some tasting wine : some steeped in sensual joy.
On gates, fresh festoons made of silk and leaves
Were hung : on houses, standards flew : and lamps
On windows burnt : a tide of people rushed
The road and raised the echo with their peals,
Parading pomps that mark a galaday.
The land was redolent of the flowers which rained
Profuse in all directions. In the night
In question, Lanka was astir : and Sleep
From door to door to people visits paid
In vain : for none would court the nymph.
Illusive hope, in streets and groves, on shores
Of streams, or at the threshold of a house,
The Rakshas' heart allured by singing thus,
"Tomorrow valiant Meghnad by his arms
Shall most assuredly cut off in the field
Both Ram and Lakshman. He shall fetter fast
Bibhishan, traitor vile, and chase away
The wretched foe beyond the ocean's pale :
So routs the lion, jackals by his might !
The demon Rahu that in danger's shape
Obscures the lunar Lanka, land of gold,
Shall run away affrighted to his haunt.

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The home of nectar (moon), released, shall soothe
With drops ambrosial people's heart again."
No wonder, Rakshas' heart was steeped in joy.
The spouse of Rama, in a chamber dark,
Was weeping. Letting her alone, the guards,
(A band of females), curious to behold
The town's amusements' wandered, to and fro,
As leaving life-less in her lair a fawn,
Her hapless prey, the tigress, free from care,
Adventures wildly through the distant woods.
The damsel wore a sad and gloomy look
Like sun-stone dim in caves of mine obscure
Untouched by solar rays, or like the nymph,
Fair Lakshmi, bimba-lipped, in ocean-bed.
The breeze at distance hissed from time to time,
As sighs a mourner: quivered rustling leaves,
As if afflicted. Sat the silent birds
On bough of trees. Unnumbered flowers dropped
From tree below, as if in deep distress
The tree disrobed itself of jewels bright.
Afar the river with the murmuring sound
Of currents weeping to the sea advanced,
As if the message sad of Sita's tale
To tell the lord of water. Moon-beams bright
This dismal forest never greet. For how
In dirty water can a lotus bloom?
But still the matchless grace of Sita lit
The wood. Alone the damsel sat in grief
Like Gleam incarnate in a gloomy land.
Anon arrived with streaming eyes the fair
And good Sarama. At the graceful feet

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Of Sita, sat the nymph, the type of grace
Imperial of the Rakshas race, in fact,
But in the raiment of a Raksha wife.
A long interval passed before the nymph
Her tears brushed and gently thus began :—
"The warders vile, O goddess, leaving thee
Unguarded, witness festive scenes and sports
Abroad with pleasure. As I got the scent,
I rushed to thee in haste to greet thy feet.
The casket I have brought with me contains
Vermilion with which thy handsome brow
I mean to decorate. The wretched garb
Thy body wields suits not a nymph
Whose husband lives. Most cruel is the lord
Of Lanka vile ! Who plucks the lotus-leaves ?
I cannot guess thy jewels how he thieved.''
The Raksha's wife withdrew from casket fair
The powder red and gently marked the line
Which parted hair on Sita's comely head.
The dots applied with skill adorned her brow,
As Venus crowns the head of Vesper fair.
Anon she took the dust of Sita's feet
And said, "O goddess Grace, condone my fault ;
For I have touched thy frame adored by gods.
But ever in thy service is thy slave !"
With this submission meek she sat again
At Sita's feet and glowed like golden lamp
Illuming all the quarters at the root
Of holy basil. Thus in gentle terms
Responded Sita, Mithila's princess fair,
"O damsel graceful like the moon, the charge
Of theft which thou wouldst lay at Ravan's door
Is quite un-founded. For the jewels bright,

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(A victim helpless in the villain's hand
In that asylum of the forest dense)
I took off from my person. On the way
I dropped them, one by one, as marks which served
The purpose of a bridge :—a faithful track
Which led my lord to Lanka, land of gold.
Emeralds, pearls and gems and what on earth
I may not slight, my husband to attain ?"
Responded Sarama thus :—"With honeyed lips
Thou didst describe to me thy wedding once
And exile to the woods of virtuous Ram,
The crown of Raghu's race. Now tell me, pray,
How thee abducted Ravan, Rakshas' lord.
Narrate to me this matter in detail
And kindly quench my thirst of knowledge great,
With rain of nectar. Absent is the train
Of warders; at this suited moment, say,
How managed this dissembler to deceive
The god-like Lakshman, enter Rama's house
And steal this precious gem." As from the chasm
Of mountain Himalaya, in currents sweet
And murmurs gentle, flows the sacred stream,
So words melodious flowed from Sita's mouth,
With which she greeted thus the Raksha's wife :—
"My dear companion, e'er dost thou want
To do me good. To hear this mournful tale,
If wish impels thee, pray attend with care.
O fair-eyed nymph, on Godavari's coast
We dwelt in peace, as in a lovely nest
Constructed on the summit of a tree
Colossal, dwell a pair of pigeons gay.

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A hideous forest famed as Pancha-vati
Which vies with Nandan heavenly was our home.
The virtuous Lakshman served us, day and night.
Reflect a bit. With Dandak for his store,
What wants a person hath in all the world?
Sumitra's son secured the roots of trees
And fruits. My gracious lord would often hunt.
But ever did the best of Raghu's race
Desist from animal slaughter : and his grace
Profound like sea is famous in the world.
About my former weal I all forgot.
I am a princess, wife of Raghu's. house ;
But dearest Sarma mine, this dreadful wood
To me it proved a source of great delight.
Full many a flower of various hues and kinds
Around my hermitage for ever bloomed.
The spring was boon-companion of the woods.
The cuckoo roused me with its dulcet notes
At break of day. Is there a bard on earth,
In service of a queen, to wake her up
With charming songs, as clever as the bird?
The peacock and the pea-hen danced with glee
At threshold of my house. And are there dancers, pray,
My sweet, so expert in the art as these?
And often guests would see me at my house ;
For instance, elephants small and youthful fawns,
And birds of various colours, white or black,
Or checkered like the rain-bow in the sky,
And beasts who do not prey. I reared them all
With great esteem and care, as in a dreary wild
The stream with water filled by grace of clouds

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Regales the thirsty travellers. And the pond,
Transparent, was my looking-glass. My hair
Was graced with lotus flashing bright like gem.
A floral verdant dress I wore: and I was styled
A sylvan goddess by my lord amused.
And shall I get my husband back, alas!
And will mine eyes accurst again behold
Those feet like lilies glowing in the pond
Of hope and dear like pupils which they own?
O cruel fates, I know not how I erred
To merit your displeasure?" Saying this,
She wept. With her condoled Sarama too
And shed a flood of tears: but, later on, relieved
She thus addressed her, "If the memory sad
Of by-gone days afflicts thy heart,
Desist from this unpleasant topic, pray:
To see thee shedding tears, I wish to die,"
In tones more dulcet than the voice of swan
The nymph replied, "who else will weep, my lass,
Except my luck-less self in all the world?
To ancient history list, my comrade dear.
As in the rainy season by the flood
Oppressed, the wave in both directions pours
Its water, stepping o'er the river's coast,
The heart aggrieved so tells its tragic tale
To others. So, Sarama, lend thine ears
To my account. To whom else may I speak
My mind in Rakshas' land? We dwelt in woods
With pleasure on the river's coast. Alas!
My friend, the beauty of that forest tract
Pray, how may I describe? In dreams I heard

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The note melodious of the sylvan-lute
The sylvan goddess played : in lotus-groves,
I saw the sportive damsels of the sky
In guise of solar rays. At times, the wives
Of saints like moon-beams gleaming in a land
Of gloom would pay us visits with a smile !
At times I sat down on a hide of deer
With different colours painted, at the root
Of some gigantic tree : and as my mate
The shadow I accosted. With the hind
I often danced with pleasure in the woods ;
I sang, excited by the cukoo's note . . . .
I wedded to the tree the youthful plant,
O lady chaste ; and as she put forth buds,
The blossoms I accosted with delight
As daughters of my son, The humming bee
As grand-child's husband I would often greet.
At times I used to wander with my lord
At river's coast. In limpid stream me-thought
I saw the grace of novel stars and sky
And moon. At times I got up to the hills
And sat down at my husband's feet, as rests
A plant beside a towering mango-tree.
With rain of words ambrosial how my lord
My heart delighted, language cannot paint.
To whom, alas ! the scene I may depict ?
I hear, in Kailash, on a golden throne,
With pomp and glory seated with his spouse,
The lord of Gouri with his five-fold mouth
Reveals the tenets, to his dearer half,
Of Vedas, scriptures holy and Purans
(Religious doctrines,) so my lovely lord
On many a noble subject dwelt at length.

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Methinks I hear him in this wood for-lorn.
O fates unkind, for ever am I barred
From that enchanting music ?" Paused the nymph,
(With eyes of lotus graced). Sarama thus
Responded, "Nymph, attending to thy tale,
I learn to slight the pomp of court. My heart
Inclines to give up royal pleasure here,
And seek the woods : but nervous fear, anon,
Subdues my will ; for solar rays alone,
For special merits they possess, succeed
In chasing darkness of a forest dense.
But Night with her incursions vile enshrouds
The world in gloom. So, where thy steps advance,
Enchantress of the world, creation's joy,
The people are enraptured. Tell me, sweet,
What means for thy abduction Rakshas' lord
Adopted. I, thy serving maid, have heard
The sound of lute, the cuckoo's note as well,
In jolly spring among the verdant leaves,
But not on earth a nectared voice like thine.
Look up, my sweet, at welkin blue ; the Moon,
Asylum of the nectar, (heavenly draught,)
Who pales before thy beauty, smiling drinks
The honey of thy words. And all the birds
With cuckoo silent anxiously await
To hear thy tale with which, O damsel chaste,
Relieve the suspense of their heart, I pray."
Responded thus the wife of Ram, "My mate,
With pleasure and in peace we passed our days
In Pancha-vati thus, for many a year.
At last thy husband' sister, Shurpa-nakha,

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Appeared and caused a serious mischief there.
Of shame, O Sarama mine, I wish to die
When I remember her mis-deeds. Oh! Fie
Upon her, blot on race of females fair.
The tigress wished to slay me with a view
To marry Raghav. Deep incensed, advanced
Heroic Lakshman with a frown and chased
The demoness. Rushed Rakshas' armed hosts:
A battle furious raged in Dandak-woods.
Affrighted to my hut I ran in haste.
How much I wept to hear the twang of bow,
I cannot say. With eyelids closed and hands
Combined, I prayed the gods above to shield
My Raghav. Screams of grief and lion's roar
Ascended welkin. On the ground I dropped,
Quite senseless. O my mate, I do not know
How long I lay in this condition sad.
The best of Raghu's race with touch of hands
Like velvet roused me. As the gentle breeze
In spring delightful whispers in a grove,
My husband in a voice melodious said,
"Arise, O mistress of my life, the wealth
Of Raghu's scion, joy of Raghu's house.
This bed becomes thee not, O nymph
Of golden hue." Shall I, Sarama dear, again
This voice enchanting hear?" Anon she fell
And fainted. Sarama held her in her arms.
She sheltered in her lap: so rolls in pain
On earth a bird (that, seated on a tree
With merry songs regaled the ear,) when hit
By arrows pointed aimed by fowlers vile.
A period long elapsed before the nymph
Regained her sense. Sarama wept and said:

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"Condone my fault, O Mithila's princess fair !
A senseless creature I, without a cause,
Oppressed thee thus to-day." The fair-haired nymph,
The spouse of Raghav, gently answered thus :—
"Friend, thou art not to blame ; attend with care ;
The thread of ancient history I resume.
From Shurpa-nakha thou hast heard the trick,
The vile deception practised by Marich,
The wretch ; as, in an arid tract of land,
The mirage dupes the traveller. In an hour
Ominous, prompted by my greed, I begged
The golden stag. With bow and arrows armed
My husband, leaving me (his spouse) in charge
Of brother Lakshman, set out for his prey.
The stag fictitious, fleeting like the flash
Of lightning, beat a quick retreat and lit
The forest, followed by my gallant lord,
Advancing with a lion's stately gait.
Unlucky most, I lost the apple of mine eye.
Anon, my mate, I heard a distant scream
Like this ; "O brother Lakshman, where art thou
In this emergent moment ? For I die."
Sumitra's son heroic gave a start :
I started, held his hand and begged him thus :—
"Proceed, O hero, to the woods and speed
Like wind. Methinks some person is in grief
And summons thee to aid. My soul laments
To hear his screams. For Raghav, it appears,
Remembers thee in peril." Lakshman said,

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"O madam, sorry thee I cannot leave
In forest thus alone. Dost thou not know
That Rakshas most deceitful wander here?
But doubt not Rama's safety, I implore.
For who can quell the crown of Raghu's race
On earth, a hero by whose might the pride
Of war-like, god-like Bhriguram was crushed?"
The scream again I heard, "Ah! where art thou,
My brother Lakshman? Where is Sita mine,
In peril which besets me fast?" My mate,
I lost all patience, loosed his hand and said,
"A mother-in-law gracious most and kind
I have in queen Sumitra. Who maintains
The theory she wielded thee in womb,
O tyrant? God hath built thy heart with stone.
A cruel tigress gave thee birth in woods
And licked thee unto shape, thou heartless wretch.
O coward vile and blot on heroes' race,
I will just start and make it out myself
By whom I am remembered in the woods
With plaintive notes." With flushed and crimson eyes,
Indignant Lakshman, bravest of the brave,
Sustained his bow at once, his quiver slung
Upon his back and me he thus addressed :—
"O Janak's daughter, thee I truly deem
As mother mine; and hence thy groundless charge
I pocket coolly. As desired by thee,
I start at once. Pray, keep a vigilant eye
And have a care : for no one knows to-day
What dire misfortune might befall us here

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But I am not to blame. By thy command,
I leave thee." Saying this, he quick withdrew.
My dear companion, there in solitude
How anxious did I feel, I cannot say.
The day advanced; with merry shouts of joy
The fawn, the young one of the deer, the birds
Who ever keep the vow of eating fruits,
Descended, one by one. But with a start
Among the guests, an ascetic I beheld,
Whose clotted hair thick clustered round his head,
With wooden pot of water in his hand
And frame with ashes dyed from head to feet.
Alas! my comrade had I known a snake
Most deadly, lurking in the midst of flowers
Or poison traced in water pure, would I
Have fallen prostrate at the wretch's feet?
The traitor said, "O wife of Raghu's house,
Look here! A pilgrim (famished), pines for food:
Relieve his want, benefactress in the woods."
I veiled my face, and thus with folded hands
Addressed him, "Rest awhile, I pray, my lord,
Beneath the tree, and for thy seat, accept
This skin of deer. The crown of Raghu's race
With brother Lakshman shall anon return."
The villain lost his temper, (and his wrath
Was feigned and well-assumed) and said, "A guest
Arriving at thy threshold solicits alms
In hunger. Dost thou coolly spurn him thus,
Unmindful of his prayer? Janak's daughter, shame!
A wife of Raghu's house! and wilt thou stain

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The glory of the noble Raghu's line?
What vile conceit impels thee, lass, to slight
A Brahmin? Prithee give me alms: or else
I curse thee sorely and depart: for know,
The Rakshas' lord shall be thy husband's foe,
By virtue of my curse." Companion dear,
Of shame and fear I bade adieu at once,
And from my house emerged with alms in hand.
I did not look before I leaped. I took
A fatal step. The brother of thy lord
Triumphant seized me in an evil hour.
Diana-faced nymph, to wood-land dense
I wandered once with Raghav. Near the shrub
A cheerful hind was grazing at her ease.
A sudden scream aroused me, when I saw
With fear a tiger beaming like the flash
Of lightning pounce upon the gentle fawn.
"Preserve her, O my lord!" I said, and fell
Down prostrate at his feet: and in a trice
My lord with fire inherent in his arms
Consumed the monster. From the ground I raised
The forest-beauty and preserved her life
With care. The lord of Rakshas, O my friend,
My person seized in foresaid tiger's guise.
But, me, a luckless hind to save, alas!
In danger imminent, no one ever came.
I filled the forest with my screams of grief:
I heard a moan of sorrow in the woods:
Methought the sylvan deity wept aggreived
On my account. My wail was all in vain,
And moved him not at all. The flame of fire
May melt the iron. What may water do
In this direction? For no flood of tears

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Can ever move a heart of adamant made.
His knotted hair dissolved : he dropped his pot
Below : and dressed in pomp as king, the fool
To chariot Pushpak pulled me up by force.
Oh ! How the villain threatened ! How he coaxed !
The very idea makes me wish to die
Of shame. The monster swiftly drove his car.
My piteous cry was useless : can a frog
With tears a reptile move ? The rattling wheels
Produced a horrible sound which drowned my screams,
To my misfortune. When gigantic trees,
By violent tempests tossed, a clamour raise,
Can coo-ing notes of dove attract the ear ?
My pathetic wails were therefore heard by none.
Perplexed I put off from my body soon
Gold armlets, bracelets, anklets, chain and wreath
And gems which deck the locks and earrings bright
And dropped them, one by one, to solid earth :
And this is why no jewels deck my frame.
O Raksha's wife, unfounded is thy charge
Against thy husband's brother." Sita paused.
Responded Sarama thus, "My thirst, as yet,
O Mithila's princess, hath not been appeased.
From thee, I solicit more of nectar sweet
Which charmed my sense." The lunar-faced nymph
Resumed her subject thus, " O damsel sweet,
If thou art curious, listen to my tale.
To whom else will my tragic case appeal ?

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The lord of Lanka drove his car with speed :
So goes a fowler home, who caught a bird :
And as the bird in torture cries in net
And tries to fly in vain, I wept aggrieved
And thus adored the gods in mind, "I hear,
Thou bearest sound, O sky. I therefore pray,
Convey the message of my wretched plight
To where the gem of Raghu's race abides,
Attended by his brother, victor of the world.
O perfume-bearer breeze, to herald's post
I thee appoint. Pray, hasten to my lord.
O cloud, thou source of water, roaring loud
Proclaim my husband's name and call him here.
O bee whom honey prompts, abandon flowers
And hum the message of my wretched plight
In groves frequented by my gracious lord.
O cuckoo, friend of spring, with five-fold notes
Of music, sing my sad and tragic tale,
And thus transmit the news to Raghav brave.
To me lamenting thus none lent his ears.
The golden chariot moved and left behind
The mountain-peak (which kissed the sky), the woods,
Lakes limpid, rivers, groves, and many a tract
Of land in twinkling of an eye. My friend,
In person thou hast witnessed Pushpak's speed :
Description, then, is needless on the score.
A long interval passed, before I heard
A lion's hideous roar which rent the sky.
The fidgety horses shied : the golden car
Its balance lost : afraid I oped mine eyes.
And, lo! before me stood a form huge
Appalling, grisly like the Pralay cloud,

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Destructive, resting on a mountain-peak.
The hero thundered, "Thief, I know thee well!
For thou art Lanka's king. Whose wife today
Hast thou abducted? Knave, whose lamp of love
Hast thou extinguished in some hapless home
And left the owner in the dark to pine?
On missions godless, thou art ever bent.
But with this arrow keen today, O wretch,
Accomplished villain most in Brahma's world,
I mean to end thy life and thus remove
The stain which brands a hero's glorious name."
With this remark, my mate, the hero roared!
My courage failed me, and I swooned again.
Restored to consciousness, anon, I found
I lay upon the ground. The Raksha brave
Was fighting with the hero with a shout.
The battle dreadful, how a woman's tongue
Could ever sketch? Afraid I shut mine eyes,
And, weeping sore, devoutly prayed the gods
To take the hero's part and slay my foe,
The Raksha. "Rescue! gods," I cried in vain.
To forests dense I thought to rush and run
Afar! I rose, but with a slip I fell,
Impelled by earthquake, as it were. The earth
I thus entreated, "Mother, kindly split
And give me shelter in thy tender lap.
Delay not, please. Thy callousness, indeed,
To thy unhappy daughter's pain is strange!
The wretch shall come back soon, as in the night,
The thief returns to see his stolen gem
Which he with care concealed beneath the ground

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Run to the rescue, hence, my mother good !"
In welkin high the battle furious raged :
The earth vibrated : clamour filled the land.
I fainted once again. Now lend thine ears
To matters, friend, most curious in the world.
I saw in dream my mother goddess earth.
The gracious nymph appeared : and in her lap
She held me fast and soon in lovely tone
She thus began, "my child, as prompted by the gods
And fates to bring about his downfall soon,
The Raksha seized thee in an evil hour.
They frown on him and seek to ease my load
I cannot bear : the tables have been turned.
But thee, through whom his fall, O princess fair,
Is thus designed, I offer thanks sincere.
For thou shalt be the instrument to kill
The torture of thy mother. Look and see
The Future, :—gates of which I open wide.
I saw before me, comrade, heroes five
Colossal, high like hills that touch the sky,
Immersed in grief acute, and lost in thought.
There was a pause, when Raghav, lord supreme,
Attended by his brother Lakshman came.
The face, dejected, of my husband, friend,
My spirit damped : the pain and shock I felt
I cannot with my tongue express in full.
The heroes piously adored his feet,
Made friends with Ram and Lakshman, and advanced
To Bali's capital fair. By battling hard
Ram killed the king of that domain and gave
The kingdom to the chief among the five.

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Messengers ran on errand every side.
Unnumbered heroes yelled and trod on earth
Which shook convulsed. I shut mine eyes in fright.
The goddess earth, my mother, laughed and said.
"Of whom art thou afraid, O Janak's child?
King Sugriv, there, intent on thy release
Is calling all his gallant troops to arms.
Thy war-like lord hath just in combat slain
The hero known as Bali in the world.
Look! Yonder is the city, fair and large,
Called Kishkindha. Like Indra's heavenly host
Behold the heroes there, prepare for war."
I saw a rank of serried warriors brave
Advancing in procession with a shout
Like gurgling water-currents caused by rain.
Forests dense collapsed with mighty creaks:
The streams were rendered jejune: beasts of prey
Were scared away: the din disturbed the world.

The army soon alighted at the coast
Of ocean: and astonished I beheld
Slabs floating on its surface. There with force
Unearthly, warriors tore the lofty peaks
Of mountains, dragged them to the sea amain
And with constructive skill of architects
A bridge erected, wonder of the world!
The ocean, at my lord's command, itself
Wore iron-chains. With martial zeal inspired,
The army crossed the boundless sea whose might.

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Resistless, puissant, none could ever quell.
By heroes trampled, golden Lanka shook :
And shouts of Rama's success rent the sky !
I wept for joy, my mate : and, later on,
In golden palace, seated on a throne
Of gold, I saw the Raksha, by whose side,
A hero sat, sedate like virtue's self
Who now advanced and gently said, "O king,
Restore to Ram his Sita quick and greet
His feet revered : or, else thy doom is sealed."
To fury goaded, mad with worldly pomp
The foe of Ram chastised and kicked the sage
Who, thus disgraced, offended left the court
And met my lord, the master of my life."
Sarama answered, "goodness only knows
How much my lord condoles with thee in grief,
And how distressed on thy account we feel."
To her responded Mithila's princess fair,
"I know,—Bibhishan ever in our need
Supports us warmly : so dost thou, my sweet :
For in this land I owe my wretched life
To thy compassion sole and tender care.
And now on vision wondrous let me dwell.
The Rakshas drew them out in war-array :
The trumpet blew : the out-cry rent the sky.
Inspired with martial zeal like lions brave
The rivals measured swords, that shook my heart.
Blood flowed in currents like a stream. I saw
Unnumbered corpses piled in form of hills.
In legions came the headless demons fierce,
Malignant demigods and spectres foul :
And with them rushed vile vultures, ravenous hounds

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And jackals sly and countless beasts of prey.
Resounded Lanka with a hideous din !
Again in council Rakshas' lord I saw,
Dejected and aggrieved, with streaming eyes.
This time his pride was curbed by Raghav's might,
No doubt. Afflicted sore, he thus exclaimed,
"Was this the pass ordained for me by fates ?
O soldiers, just proceed and rouse with care
My brother Kumbha-karn like Shambhu brave,
Armed with a dart. None else can us preserve."
The Rakshas rushed : the trumpet beat aloud :
And Raksha women raised auspicious sounds.
The huge colossal monster entered now
The lists. My lord, with arrow keen in hand,
(Whom none can match in archery, my mate)
Cut off his head. Aroused before his time
The dauntless hero died. Tremendous shouts
Announcing Rama's victory tore the sky :
And Lanka, deep convulsed, with Ravan wailed",
I fell at mother's feet and humbly said,
"The sight is too much for my tender heart,
Which ever throbs for people in their grief.
So, halt, O nymph benign!" She laughed amused
And said, "The scene is genuine, Raghav's spouse.
Thy husband surely Lanka shall reduce
To this condition, and chastise her lord."
Pray, widely ope thine eyes and look again."
The following scene I witnessed, then in dream :
With jewels, coral-wreaths and garb of silk

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In hand, the heavenly damsels, bright and fair,
Arrived and in a circle round me stood,
With smiles delightful playing on their lips.
Some said, "O chaste one, rise : for Ravan vile
Is dead." Some said, "Arise, O Raghav's wealth,
With perfumed water wash thy tender frame
And wear these jewels bright, for Indra's spouse
Shall bring to thee to-day thy husband back."
With folded hands, my friend, I answered thus,
"O nymphs of heaven, my toilet I ignore.
With your permission in my present style
My husband I will see. For Sita poor
In modest garb should greet her noble lord."
The nymphs replied, "Mithila's princess, list :
The gem in mine discovered is unclean :
But ere the same is offered to a king,
The owner ought to polish it with care".
With cries and smiles alternate, O my friend,
I decked myself. Anon, beside me close,
I saw effulgent like the rising sun
My lord and senseless rushed to seize his feet.
But in an instant I was roused from sleep.
The world was steeped in gloom before mine eyes,
As when the lamp is put out in the night,
The room assumes a dark and dreary look.
Pray, why did I survive the shock, O fates ?
For life to me can bring no spark of joy!"
The fair one paused. So stops a merry lute
Whose chords give way. The type of royal grace

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Sarama in the guise of Raksha's wife
Responded thus, "O Janak's child, thou shalt
Attain thy lord : decisive is thy dream,
Which brings forth fruits, behold, from day to day.
The slabs on water float : the mighty dread
Of demons, gods and men hath been removed
By Kumbha-Karna's death Bibhishan sage,
As dreams foretold, adores the feet of Ram.
Served right, Pulasta's grandson vile shall fall,
Both root and branch : the sequel now, I pray."
Thus queried Sita, sweet of tongue, resumed
Her topic thus, "My dear and lovely mate,
Whose charm obscures the moon, I oped mine eyes
And saw in front the Raksha. On the ground
Reclined his rival like a peak sublime
By lightning struck. Thus spake the foe of Ram,
"O lily-faced nymph, pray open wide
Thy lotus eyes and witness Ravan's might
That conquered Jatayu, the world-renowned."
But for his fate the fool should thank himself.
"I die, while struggling for a righteous cause,"
The hero gently said, "The open fight
Which ended in my fall shall lead me up
To god's domain. But thou art doomed, O knave,
To damned perdition. For, reflect a bit,
O jackal mean, impelled by wicked greed
And brutal lust, a lioness thou dost crave."
The dying hero paused, and spake no more.
The wicked Ravan to his car again
Uplifted me by force. With folded hands
The fallen warrior I entreated thus,

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" My name is Sita : I am Janak's child
And Raghav's spouse, O sire. The sinner vile
Abducted me in absence of my lord :—
Which please to tell him, if thou see him here."
With loud and rattling notes, the golden car
The welkin scaled. I heard a dreadful roar.
Below, the ocean blue was rolling on
With ceaseless currents with its depth unknown
And shore unseen. Anon, I tried to jump
And sink. The wretch prevented my design.
The marine animals I invoked for help :
But none the hapless damsel seemed to mind.
The golden car, as fleeting as the mind,
Passed like a meteor : and in a trice
Fair Lanka flashed before my wretched eyes.
The land of gold like marks of sandal red
Adorns the forehead of the ocean vast :
But to a captive what avails a gaol
Of gold ? What matters to a bird, indeed,
The rambler in the woods, a cage of gem ?
In moments most unlucky, Sarama fair
I saw the light. For who hath ever heard
A princess, nay a queen, is destined thus
To pass her days in prison ?" With her hands
Entwined round Sarama's neck, the fair one wept :
And Sarama, sorrowing, likewise followed suit.
Sarama fair-eyed, then, her gushing tears
Restrained and Sita thus addressed, "O nymph,
No one can ever blot out fates' decree.
Most rightly hath the goddess Earth to thee
Revealed the future : doubt it not, I say.
By Providence' gracious will hath Lanka's lord

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Thy sacred person seized : and he shall pay
Most dearly for his sins, with all his brood.
In Lanka boastful of her heroes once,
Which hero now survives to face the foe ?
O chaste one, speak; where have the heroes fled
Who conquered once the world ? At sea-coast there
Behold the animals, fond of flesh, devour
The corpses laid in heaps. Just prick thine ears
To catch the widows' wail, from house to house.
Thy night of sorrow soon shall disappear :
Thy dream shall take the aspect of the truth.
The band of fairies holding coral-wreaths
Shall deck thy person in a merry mood,
And thou shalt see thy lord, as jolly earth
With verdant leaves and flowers accosts the spring.
Forget me not, O damsel chaste, I pray.
For ever, I will fondly cherish, dear,
Thine image in the temple of my heart,
As when the night arrives, the merry pool
With pleasure courts the dancing moon-beam bright.
O nymph of graceful hair, to sufferings keen
In Lanka, cruel Rakshas thee consigned,
Alas ! But know that I am not to blame."
The princess of Mithila answered thus,
"Is there a friend existing in the world
Who can to thee a candle hold :— a friend
Like thee to confer benefits on my head ?
Thou art to me, O Rakhsa's wife, as sweet
And as refreshing as the gentle stream
In wilderness. Afflicted like the sun,

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Me like the soothing shade thou hast relieved.
Thou art the lotus of a filthy tank :
Incarnate mercy in a heartless soul.
Thou art the gem that crowns the land of gold
Destructive like a snake. I need not dwell
Upon the subject more. For I am poor :
And thou, a jewel bright. Reflect, my dear :—
By grace of fortune, if a pauper haps
A treasure to secure, with great esteem
He hugs it in his heart and slights it not."
At Sita's statement, Sarama humbly bowed
And said, "my gracious mistress, fare thee well !
O lotus of the house of Raghu sweet,
My heart is ever loth with thee to part.
But then in Rama's service is my lord.
If Lanka's monarch gathers through his spies
That I to thee occasional visits pay,
He shall be wrath, and I shall come to grief."
Responded Mithila's princess thus, "Adieu !
My friend, pray hasten home. I hear
The sound of footsteps distant. Warders shrewd,
I fear, are pacing back to me their way."
Sarama ran, as flies a frightened hind :
And like a flower lonely in a forest huge,
The goddess Sita lingered there alone.

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BOOK V

MAYA (GODDESS OF ILLUSION) DESCENDS TO LANKA TO GUIDE LAKSHMAN

In heaven the star-lit night appeared with smiles :
But care afflicted mighty Indra's heart.
He got up from his floral bed and graced
His throne of gem in silence : other gods
In mansions golden lay. Offended deep,
Queen Shachi gently thus addressed her lord :—
"My love, I know not how my wretched self,
Devoted to thy service, day and night,
Hath incurred thy displeasure. I observe
The sleeping chamber studious thou dost shun !
There dozes fair and charming Urvashi :
And Menaka, affrighted, starts in sleep :
And Chitra-lekha figures like a doll.
The goddess sleep avoids thy side alone :
For no one else she dreads. At dead of night
Who cares to watch? Have demons vile, thy foes,
Approached the threshold of the gates of heaven ?"
Responded Indra thus :—"O goddess fair,
The thought how Lakshman brave will slay
The peerless warrior Ravan's son at dawn
Torments my heart and thus disturbs my sleep."
With youth perennial graced, the goddess thus,
"My lord, thou hast secured the heavenly arms
Where-with brave Kartik despatched Tarak dire.
By grace of fortune Shiva deity dread

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Himself, to thee accords his warm support.
The goddess Gouri, fair and bright like gold,
Was pleased to pledge to us her promise thus,
"Success shall crown to-morrow your design :
The deity Maya would herself descend
And draw out plans of conquest in the war.
Come, come my lord, ungrounded is thy fear."
God Indra thus, "Thy words are true, I own.
The weapons thou alludest to, I sent
To Ram already : still I fail to see
How Lakshman e'en with Maya's aid can slay
The doughty Meghnad matchless in the fight.
For look, the elephant, mighty as he is,
Against the *lion* cannot hold his own.
The peal of thunder I have heard, my love,
The rattling sound produced by dismal clouds.
And I have seen my lightning with a speed
Appalling—flashing in my golden car.
But I confess when archer Meghanad
Attaching fiery arrows to his bow
In field of war, begins to shout, my heart
Subdued by awe, with quick pulsations beats :
Nay, Airavat inclines before his dart !"
With this remark the king ot gods upheaved
A sigh of grief : and by his side his spouse
Devoted to her lord, dejected sat.
The moon-like Rambha, Chitra-lekha fair,
Menaka sweet and graceful Urvashi,
All in a circle stood around the god,
As when the lotus shuts its eyes at night,
Unnumbered beams of moon besiege the stalk,
Or as a row of glittering lamps adorns
The footstool of the goddess Durga great,

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When she in autumn cheers our native land.
In silence sat absorbed in grief the pair,
When Maya, nymph divine, alighted there.
Her presence lent to diamonds double grace,
As solar rays, by courting coral flowers,
Enrich their golden hue, in Nandan-woods.
The godly pair arose and with esteem
Her lotus-feet adored. The goddess sat
Upon a golden throne, and blessed them both.
With folded hands, the crown of godly race
Thus queried, "Mother, let us know thy will."
The goddess of illusion thus, "I hie,
Aditi's son, to Lanka for thy sake.
By wiles, I mean to crumble unto dust
The royal diadem of the Raksha's race.
Look there : the tragic Night in haste departs :
And dawn delightful, Orient's crown, bids fair
To hail and beam with sweet and gentle smiles.
Rejoice : for as Aurora opes her gait,
The lotus-sun of Lanka shall decline.
The hero Lakshman I will conduct just
To Nikumbhil designed for sacrifice.
Into a juggler's trap which I devised
For downfall of the Raksha he shall fall
And die, as pre-ordained by fates :
So meets his doom a lion in a net !
But, mark, when Raksha king the news obtains
About his son's decease, afflicted sore
To combat he shall rush like Yama dire,
Who will in that emergent moment pray,
His mighty, vengeful hand. resist by force,
And from the fury of his wrath preserve
The hero Ram, his brother and his friends ?

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Just ponder on the point, o king of gods !"
Namuchi's foe, the lord of Shachi thus
Responded :—"goddess, if thy magic skill
Destroy the hero dauntless in the fight,
Prince Meghnad, pride of Rakshas' gallant race,
Attended by my army, I will rush
To Lanka, field of war, myself and fight
For Raghav's sake, the favourite of the gods.
To earth to-morrow I descend with speed
Of lightning, to chastise the Raksha vile."
Responded Maya thus, "This noble act
Befits Aditi's son with thunder armed.
O best of gods, thy words have cheered my heart.
Permit me now to Lanka to proceed".
The deity (force of nature) having thus announced
Her gracious will departed from the place
And Indra's feet the goddess sleep adored,
At once :—when holding Shachi's lily hands
To bed-room mighty Indra bent his steps,
To take repose : and to their mansions traced
Their steps, the dancing damsels of the sky,
Named Rambha, Urvashi, and all the rest.
They put off from their frame the bracelets bright,
The chains of gold, the anklets, garbs of silk :
And, fair as sun-beams, lay them down to rest.
The fragrant breeze in merry whispers blew
And coquetted with their breasts and waving hair
And features in succession like the bee
That dallies with the blooming flower in grove.
Alighted Maya at the golden gate
Of paradise which opened wide with notes
That charmed the ear. Emerged therefrom
The deity Maya mystic, and amain

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Invoked the goddess Dream to whom she spake
In gentle accents thus, " O merry nymph,
Descend in speed and visit Lakshman's camp
And putting on his mother's masquerade
Where sleeps the hero, sit ahead of him
And tell him this, " my child, get up from bed :
The night is gone : at Lanka's northern gate
There is a pond whose margin green is decked
With goddess Chandi's famous golden shrine.
Please bathe at first in that delightful pool
And, culling flowers from the forest, greet
With great esteem the goddess' feet which trod
In days of yore on demons in the war :
And, by her grace benign, my blessed son,
Thy foe, the valiant Raksha, thou shalt slay.
I thee entreat to go there all alone."
Pray, goddess dream, to Lanka quick proceed
And tarry not : for day is dawning fast."
With lightning speed advanced the goddess dream
Through azure sky, and shed a flood of light :
So drops from heavens a star to earth below :
And to the camp where hero Lakshman dwelt,
She went with speed : and in his mother's guise
The wily damsel sat ahead of him
And told him all, as Maya had desired.
The hero, waking, stared on every side.
And copious tears which trickled down his cheek
His chest suffused. Afflicted thus he said,
"O mother, so unkind of thee, indeed !
I pray thee, let me have a glimpse again,
Of those respected feet whose sacred-dust
Shall surely crown me with the fruits desired.

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I burst with grief, my mother, to recall
With fancy's aid thy features blurred with tears,
When last I bade thee farewell in my land,
Whom goodness knows when I shall see again."
He wiped his tears and with an elephant's gait
Advanced to see the lord of Raghu's race.
He bowed before his brother's feet and told
The curious dream he dreamt at break of day.
Resuming then his topic thus, he said,
"My mother, as she vanished from my sight,
I loudly called out : but she answered not.
What dost thou bid me do, my gracious lord,
In this affair ? I long to know thy will."
The lord of Sita asked Bibhishan thus ;
"What is thy view, my friend ? In Rakshas' land,
As Raghav's saviour, thou art ever known."
Responded thus the best of Rakshas' race :—
"Yes, my lord, undoubted there exists
The fane of goddess Chandi made of gold,
On margin of a pool : and Rakshas' king
Himself the goddess worships in the grove
To which none else can ever dare to pass.
The place is dreadful ! Armed with a dart
In person Shiva guards the garden's gate.
Who greets the mother there is bound to thrive
And conquer, doubt it not. Thou shalt secure
The object of thy wish, if Lakshman brave
Proceed with courage to the dismal woods."
Responded Lakshman thus, "O Rakshas' crown,
Submissive ever to my brother's will,
I will proceed, if Raghav only bid."
Responded Ram, "my heart is loth, O boy,

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To put thy life to hazard once again.
But one must bow to cruel fates' decree
One can't repeal. Advance with caution, pray.
And thee who toilest virtue's cause to help,
May powers above invest with needed strength
To stand the ordeal. Heaven be thy shield !"
Sumitra's son, then, meekly bowed to Ram,
Gave friendly nods to Bibhishan, and grasped
A mighty sword : and thus equipped he passed
Towards the north where Sugriv held his post.
Approaching footsteps roused the guard who cried,
" Speak out, I charge thee on thy precious life,
And tell me who thou art : or with a stroke
Of this colossal rock, I break thy head."
" O best of heroes," Lakshman smiling said,
" I am thy friend, and sworn vassal Ram's,
" And source of ruin to the Rakshas vile."
Sugriva bowed, and Lakshman onward marched.
Some time elapsed before the garden gates
He reached and saw, astonished, close at hand
A dismal figure with his forehead decked
With digits of the moon : so wields a snake
The diamond on its crest. The clotted hair
Profusely clustered round his head sublime,
By currents of the river Ganges laved ;
In night autumnal thus the clouds above
Are lighted by the silver streak of rays
The moon emits. He held a trident big
As Sal in hand ; and ashes hid his frame.
Sumitra's son by signs perceived
This being huge was Shiva, lord of ghosts.
The hero, pricked, unsheathed his flashing sword

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Or combed their hair, (where Cupid loves to sport):
Or held the frame of lute (inlaid with gems
And made of ivory), whose golden string,
The home of music, flashed and dazed the eye :
Some danced delighted : from their rising breasts
The wreaths of diamond dangled : anklets rang
Around their feet : and girdles, round their waist.
The bite of snakes is fatal : still the braid
Of hair which snake-like hung upon their back,
Whose sight alone and, not to talk of bite,
Is apt to put in danger human life
Was deadlier far : for it excited lust,
A venom, though unseen, yet more acute.
A person when he sees a mortal snake
(Messenger foul of death,) affrighted flies.
The snake-like braid incites the lustful man
To wrap it round his neck, as Shiva-god
Puts round his head a wreath of dragons dread.
The watchful cuckoo, friend of merry spring,
Sat on the bough and uttered dulcet notes ;
And cups of music flourished close at hand.
The breeze abstracted from the heart of flowers
Their store, the scent, and blew in wanton mood.
Anon the damsels round him stood and sang
As follows :—"Hail ! O crown of Raghu's race !
No love of night adventure brings us here :
We wander not thus idly through the globe.
We dwell, O hero, in the Nandan woods
In golden fanes : ambrosia is our drink.
The garden of our youth in prime is watched
By spring perennial : in our rising breast
Tha pair of lilies ever bloom ; the juice

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Of nectar flowing in our scarlet lips
Which makes a merry pool is seldom dry.
We never die. Thrice welcome, noble lord!
We greet thee as our husband in this grove.
Attend on us. We promise thee the joy
Which people may attain in countless years
By rites austere, by penance and by prayers.
We dwell for ever in a land exempt
From grief, disease and other canker-worms
That blight the flowers which sweetly bloom on earth.
The bliss we thus experience knows no bounds."
With hands conjoined Sumitra's son replied
Thus, "Nymphs, excuse your most submissive slave.
My elder brother is the hero Ram
Whose feats the world acclaims. His spouse
Named Sita, Mithila's princess fair,
Hath been abducted by the Rakshas' king.
My vengeful hand, her rescue to secure,
Shall kill the Raksha. Bless me with your heart
So that my vow I may perform with ease.
Are ye not heavenly nymphs? A mortal I
Am bound to treat you all as mothers mine."
The hero paused and gazed, but found
The wood was desolate: and all the nymphs
As in a dream had vanished from the grove
Like fleeting shadows in a flowing stream.
The ways mysterious of the goddess sly
And artful Maya who can read on earth,
Indeed? The hero rubbed his eyes and passed.
Sometime was squandered thus before he saw

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A pond at hand ; and on its coast he found
The fane of Chandi with a flight of stairs
(A hundred steps ascending to the top)
With stones and diamonds decked, and made of
gold.
A row of burning lamps inside the shrine
Discovered verdant leaves and fragrant flowers
And water-jars and incense (burnt in pots),
While peals of bells and conches held the sides.
The warrior quick descended to the pond
And bathed and gathered lilies blue with care
Which with their fragrance sweetly cheered the
sense.
The bravest of the brave, Sumitra's son
The temple entered. With devotion meek
And methods apt, the hero bowed his head
Before the goddess Chandi (who in pomp and
state
Was mounted on a lioness' back) and said
"O source of boons, my wish thou well can'st
judge.
Thy bondsman I, a boon would beg from thee.
And who but thee who knowest all can know
The secret workings of the human heart ?
Fulfil my mission, mother, keep my vow :
For I intend to slay the Raksha vile today".
The clouds at distance loomed : the thunder
pealed !
Fair Lanka, as it were, by earth-quake moved
Vibrated with her fanes and woods and pools :
And in a trice the goddess Maya flashed,
Effulgent on a throne before his eyes.
In quick succession, fleeting dazzling lights

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Which looked like lightning gleamed and lit the place :
And as they passed away, the fane was steeped
In gloom profound, which filled his heart with awe.
The goddess chaste with smiles dispelled the dark,
And thus disclosed before the hero's eye
A sight transcendent. Music flourished sweet.
Thus said the goddess Maya, "All the gods,
Sumitra's son, espouse thy side and cause.
With thy devotions pleased, sincere and pure,
To thee hath Indra sent the arms divine :
And I, by Shiva bid, appear to-night
To help thee in the war. The weapons wield
Celestial. With Bibhishan, thy friend,
The city enter please, and next proceed
To Nikumbhil, where Ravan's valiant son,
On sacrifice intent, invokes the Fire.
A coup de main is needed on thy part :
With valour of a tiger, set upon the foe
And slay him there. By virtue of my boon,
No one shall see you with his naked eye.
So unperceived by others ye shall pass
And thus can flout all dangers in the way.
O sage, in net-work of illusion fine
To hide you, I intend, as scabbard hides
The sword. So hasten there, O prince renowned."
The hero bowed before the goddess' feet.
And bent his footsteps to his brother back.
In grove the songsters coo-ed, as bards with songs
Auspicious cheer our land on festive days.

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Anon a voice from heavens afar proclaimed
"O hero Lakshman, in a happy hour
Sumitra held thee in her precious womb;
With glory of thy deeds the world shall ring
To-day: for thou hast just achieved a feat
Impossible with the gods. Immortal life
Thou hast secured, which gives celestial rank!"
The heavenly muse was hushed: the birds sent forth
A note more cheerful in the pleasant grove.
The music of the note aroused from sleep
The hero Megh-nad lying on his bed
Of flowers in his happy golden fane.
Pramila's lotus-hands he held and kissed
With tenderness her eye-lids closed and said,
(As hums the bee its love-song to its spouse,
The lily) thus: "O fair and golden dawn,
Attend! The birds invoke thee; ope thine eyes
Which vie with lilies in their grace divine.
Pray, rise, my constant joy. Thou art, my love,
The image of the sun: and sun-stone is my soul:
I lose my lustre when thine eyes are shut.
Pray rise, O price-less gem, the best of fruits
On fortune's tree, the pupil of mine eye.
Arise and see, O damsel fair like moon,
With grace abstracted from thy handsome mien
How flowers are blooming in the charming grove!"
The damsel got up like the milk-maid fair
Attracted by the sound of flutes and gazed around.
Abashed the fair one with a gentle smile
Her features veiled. The prince again thus spake;
"The gloomy night is over, sweet; or speak,

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How couldst thou bloom, O lotus of the day,
To charm mine eyes ? Now let us go, my love,
And farewell bid at mother's holy feet.
I will then duly greet the god of fire,
And rush to hostile camp to meet the foe :
And dread like thunder raining arrows keen,
Curb Ram's desire of conquest in the field."
The son of Ravan and his spouse, a pair
Unrivalled in the world, (like merry dawn
And Venus fair combined), prepared for war.
Their lustre dimmed the fire-flies who for-sook
Ambrosial juice of flowers, the feast of night :
Bees, humming, came, and rushed for honey sweet :
And cuckoos seated on the bough of trees
To highest pitch their voices raised and sang.
Announcing Meghnad's victory shouts arose,
Which, mounting welkin, shook the heart of Jove.
The warders bowed : the Rakshas' trumpet blew.
The happy pair a diamond-litter scaled,
Which led them to the palace of the queen
Named Mandodari, (Meghnad's mother) soon.
The mansion shone with emeralds, pearls and gems
And ivory, and gold, and object rare.
With staff, the female guards preserved the gate,
Some mounted on the horse, and some on foot.
Lamps bright as stars profusely shed their light :
The vernal breeze, the bearer of the scent
Of countless forest flowers, gently blew :
The music soft of violin, in its turn,
Caused raptures to the sense as if in dream.
Chastiser of the foe, the hero soon,

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Attended by his consort-fair, arrived
At threshold of the mansion of the queen.
Trijata rushed in haste to know his will.
The hero said, "Trijata, damsel, list :
For Nikumbhil I start to worship first
The god of fire : I next proceed to war.
My father's consent I have already gained,
And now my mother's blessings I would seek.
Please hasten, therefore, to the queen and say
Her son attended by her spouse awaits
Her pleasure at the gate." Trijata bowed
And said, "The queen hath gone to Shiva's shrine
Which she, unmindful of her sleep and food,
Attends, for worship of the god, O prince,
Thy welfare to secure. Who else hath got
On earth, a son heroic like thyself ?
Who else a mother noble as the queen ?"
With words like these, the herald ran with speed
Like lightning. In a chorus sang the band
Of female bards melodious thus :—"Observe,
O nymph of gold, Krittika fair ! Thy son
Who with his beam eclipses lord of night,
Like Kartik gallant waiteth at thy door,
Attended by the symbol of his force,
His consort handsome, whose majestic grace
Obscures the charms of Rohini, the fair.
For ever success treads thy lucky heels,
In that thy son crushed Indra's pride in war
And thus with might supreme governs the world
Which with her charms his spouse hath likewise won."
Emerged anon from temple Lanka's queen

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Before whose feet the couple humbly bowed.
She held them in her arms with joy supreme,
Imprinted kisses on their head, and wept.
O mother's blessed heart, thou art, indeed,
Affection's home and harbour : as the flower holds
The perfume in its folds, or as the mine
Sustains the precious gem : or as in sea
The oyster is the home of shining pearls.
The son was like the moon of autumn bright :
Like moon-beam of the autumn was his bride :
And like the star-lit night appeared the queen.
Abundant tears suffused her graceful face
Like dews that moisten verdant leaves of plants.
The hero said, "O mother, bless thy son.
For Nikumbhil I mean to start at first
To worship fire and rush to battle next.
The wretched Raghav slew a stripling mere.
But me how he can conquer, I shall see.
Anoint my head, O mother, with the dust
Of thy respected feet :—by dint of which,
By raining arrows, (weapons, swift and keen,)
From danger, Lanka I will free to-day :
Bibhishan, uncle, rebel, bound in chains
As captive I will bring, and chase away
Beyond the sea Sugriva and his kin,
And all his wicked hordes".—Spake thus the queen,
Withholding with her cloth the gush of tears,
"Thy face dispels the sorrows of my heart,
As full-moon lights the darkness of the sky.
I cannot, therefore, think to part from thee,
My child, and languish in my house alone.

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A troublesome foe in war is hero Ram
Assisted by the vilest of the lot,
Wretch Bibhishan who, like a deadly snake,
Impelled by foul desire, and led by greed,
Scruples not to slay his dearest kith and kin :
A hungry tigress swallows so her cubs.
My mother-in-law good Nikasha dame
Conceived him, child, in an unlucky hour.
For hath he not our Lanka rendered waste ?"
The hero smiled and bowing at her feet
Responded thus ; "Why fearest thou the foe,
Vile Ram or Lakshman, O my mother dear ?
(Commanded by my worthy sire), in war
I twice subdued them both. For, by thy grace,
Alone I conquered demons, gods and men,
Who ever bear in mind my vengeful might.
Great Jove himself who rules the upper world
And Nag, the nether world, may testify
To power unearthly which my arms sustain.
What fear to-day, O mother, quells thy heart ?
That Ram is trash, of whom thou art afraid."
The queen with great affection kissed his head
And, weeping, gently thus resumed her talk :—
"A juggler, child, is this Vaidehi's lord ;
Or, why is he befriended by the gods ?
Who cut the fatal noose of serpents dire
With which thine arms twice bound the brothers fast ?
Who brought to life again this Raghav sly
Destroyed with all his army by thy might ?
His ways are quite mysterious ; for I hear
He can the elements by his will control :
The heavens, if he bids, begin to pour

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Or fire cools. Mark how the slabs on water float!
How, thee, my child, to fight with wizard Ram
I may depute again, I do not know.
O cruel fates, why Shurpa-nakha, vile
And ominous, died not in her mother's womb?"
With these remarks the queen in silence wept.
The best of heroes answered thus, "In vain,
O mother, thou dost call to mind the past
Which thus afflicts thy heart: at city's gate
The foe is thundering. If he flouts us thus,
Say, is it meet I hide beneath my roof?
O nymph, the race of Rakshas is renowned
For matchless valour which the world acclaims.
And shall I, victor of the gods, permit
The boastful Ram to breathe and blot my fame?
This act shall put to shame thy father Moy
And my maternal uncles. Pause awhile.
The world shall laugh. Command thy vassal, then,
To go to war and put to death my foe.
List how the birds are coo-ing in the woods:
The dawning day now bids me to depart,
Invoke the god of fire and rush to fight
With all my host, resistless Rakshas' band.
My father's consent to the war I gained,
Already: thine, I humbly beg: for none
Can crush me, mother, with thy blessings crowned."

With hem inlaid with diamonds, Lanka's queen
Her tears gently brushed and answered thus:—
"In this destructive war may Shiva-lord,
Who shields with grace the Rakshas' noble race,

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From perils thee preserve. Alas ! I pant
And pine in sorrow sore which ties my tongue.
For in thine absence, I shall feel, my son,
As if I lost the pupil of mine eye."
Thus wept the senior queen aggrieved at heart
And next accosting Pramila she said :—
" Abide with me, my child. The blessed sight
Of thy delightful features shall relieve
The burden of my wretched life : as stars
Illume the earth in absence of the moon."
Endowed with mighty fore-arms, in a trice
The hero bowed before his mother's feet,
And parted from her side : with streaming eyes,
Attended by her son's devoted spouse
The queen her mansion entered ; and the prince
Dismissed his litter there and chose to walk
Along the avenue leading to his goal :—
The sacrificial place called Nikumbhil.
Behind him sudden he perceived a clink
Of anklets. Ever is the gentle sound
Of footsteps made by lady of his love
Detected by the lover. Meghnad laughed
And pressed the moon-like beauty to his breast.
The fair Pramila thus addressed her spouse,
"I built a castle in the air, my lord,
When I aspired to join thee on thy way
To Nikumbhil to offer sacrifice
To god of fire and thence proceed to war.
Thy mother held me back : but still in peace
I could not loiter there : distressed I came
To pay a flying visit to my love
And greet his feet. The digits of the moon,
I hear, are lighted by the solar beam :

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So I, O son of Rakshas' race, derive
From *thee* my light: the world is dark, indeed!
While thou art missing." Brighter *liquid* pearls
Rained copious from her eyes, and thus suffused
Her breast adorned with *solid* pearls, and beat
In charms the dews that deck the lotus leaf.
The best of heroes thus, "Take heart of grace,
O Lanka's Lakshmi! I shall put to death
Assuredly Lanka's foe, and hasten home.
So, back, my sweetest love, awhile and look
To Lanka's queen with care: for ere the moon
Is up and sheds his lustre through his beams,
Fair Rohini adorns the welkin blue!
Why clouds obscure the pupils of thine eyes,
The home of light, that ought to glow like pearls?
Cheer up, my angel;—let me start at once:
For, lo! the Night, deluded by thy sight
(So lovely), fondly thinks that merry dawn
Hath set in: hence she beats a quick retreat."
As in an evil hour, by Indra bid,
The hero Cupid left his dearer half
And hurried on, lord Shiva to disturb,
Engaged in holy rites and thoughts divine,
So, leaving in an ominous hour his spouse,
The hero Meghnad, pillar of his race,
Invincible warrior, matchless in the world,
Advanced. The course of destiny as fixed
By Brahma who can ever change or thwart?
The Raksha princess, later on, restrained
The flood-gate of her tears and saw afar
Her husband pass whose sight to mind recalled
The nobler beasts whom she accosted thus,
"O lord of elephants, list. I know full well

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The reason why thou ramblest in the wild.
Offended at my husband's stately gait,
Perhaps, thou hidest here thy smutted face.
O lion, who can say that hath observed
My gallant husband there, thy waist is thin?
So jealous of my lord, thou hauntest woods.
The elephant thou dost slay? My valiant lord
Subdued with dreadful strokes the king of gods."
With this, the chaste one meekly joined her hands
And looking up aloft, she spake again:
"O Gouri, mountain's daughter, vassal thine,
My wretched self, adores thy holy feet.
On Lanka, lay, O nymph, thy softening hand:
Preserve the best of Rakshas in the war;
And like a solid shield protect his frame.
This plant (myself) whom thou hast reared
Subsists on hero Meghnad, lord of trees.
Pray, at his root, O goddess, strike no axe.
Omniscient deity, thou dost know my heart;
I need not, therefore, on the point, dilate.
O mother of the world, except thyself
Who can from danger shield our native land?"
The sky, the bearer of the sound, anon
The prayer above conducted to Kailash,
As merry breeze, with wealth of perfume charged,
Conveys it to the palace of a king.
The message much perturbed the lord of sky:
The wind-god took the cue from him amain
And scattered it abroad with puffs of breath.
Dispersed in all directions, lack-a-day!
The tidings never reached the goal desired.

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Pramila wiped her tears and sore aggrieved
To home returned ; as on the Jamna's coast
The milk-maid Radha, parted from her love,
(Lord Krishna), deep dejected in her heart,
And weeping, to her house deserted turns.

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BOOK VI.

FALL OF MEGHNAD.

The hero Lakshman left the grove and hied
To Rama's tent, as runs a fowler home,
Who hath perceived a lion in the woods
To fetch keen weapons to destroy his prey.
Anon, the warrior, flushed with zeal, arrived
At his appointed goal. He meekly bent
Before his brother, cheered Bibhishan friend,
And said to Ram, "My lord, a vassal thine,
My humble self, hath scored his point at last
By virtue of thy blessings. In my heart
I hugged the image of thy holy feet,
And rushed to wood-land dense: where in the shrine
Of gold, I worshipped Chandi, goddess dire
And shrewd, who means delusive engineered
To tempt me. How, a silly mortal, I,
In adequate terms, may dwell upon her pranks?
The lunar-crested god, anon, I saw
At threshold of the temple, mounting guard.
Thy religious merits, brother, led the god
To give me passage free and un-opposed.
He quickly parted, as a snake subdued
By medicine meekly seeks its hole.
The thick of woods I entered. Rushed anon,
A lion roaring whom I chased away.
A tempest blew with awful howl and din:

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A wild-fire raged destructive like the flame
Of Pralay dread which swallows all the world.
The creaking, tumbling forest burnt ablaze !
I bravely stood the test. The fire, the friend
Of tempest, ceased to rage. The wind-god passed,
With all his retinue to a distant clime.
Anon with speed celestial nymphs advanced
Who groves frequent : from whom with folded hands
A boon I craved. They melted in the air.
At hand a radiant temple met my view.
The pool I entered, bathed, and later on,
The goddess I adored with great esteem
With azure lilies offered to her feet.
Relenting, Maya flashed before mine eyes,
And speaking thus, on me she conferred boon,
"Sumitra's son, thou hast secured the grace
Of deities and the powers that rule above.
To thee hath Indra sent the arms divine :
And I, by Shiva bid, appear tonight
To help thee in thy cause. The weapons wield
Which heaven bestowed :—with Bibhishan, thy friend,
The city enter next, and last proceed
To Nikumbhil, where Ravan's valiant son
With sacrifices due invokes the fire.
A coup-de-main is needed on thy part :
With valour of a tiger set upon thy prey
And slay him there. By virtue of my grace
Unseen by others ye shall pass, and thus,
May well defy the Rakshas on the way.

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O sage, in lattice with illusions framed,
I mean to hide you, as the scabbard hides
The flashing sword. Tis time ye hastened there."
O brother, let me know thy will at once.
The day is dawning fast. Delay may prove
Most fatal to the scheme we have in view."
Responded thus the crown of Raghu's race,
"Thyself, O brother dearer than my life,
Say, how can I, by selfish motives led,
Depute to meet a serpent in his hole,
Messenger foul of time, whose very breath
Like death itself brings panic to the heart :
Whose venom sore, which burns like fatal fire,
Consumes the mortals here and gods above ?
When Sita's rescue is a hopeless task,
In vain, O Ocean, thee I fettered fast.
In vain I slaughtered countless Rakshas here
And brought with me to Lanka, land of gold,
Unnumbered princes with their gallant hosts :
In vain, alas ! with streams of human blood
I swept the earth like deluge caused by rains.
My parents, kingdom, wealth and worldly pomp,
By sheer misfortune I had lost before :
But like a lamp that lights a lonely cell,
My spouse, the princess of Mithila fair,
Was left behind to cheer my gloomy cell.
O fates relentless, wherein have I sinned
To merit torture which consumes my heart ?
For, look, the lamp is gone ! Now who on earth
May light the embers of my fading life
Which to my soul no more can bring repose ?
O Lakshman, therefore, let us hie again
To Dandak-woods. Allured by siren hope

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We came to Lanka in an evil hour."
Sumitra's son instinct with noble rage,
Flared up and said, "Why fear subdues thy heart?
A friend of gods, my lord, may well defy
Both man and fiend. For Indra, thousand-eyed,
Shiva, the gracious god at mount Kailash,
And Gouri, friend of virtue (mountain's child),
And other gods espouse thy righteous cause.
Pray, look at Lanka :—like a fatal cloud
Divine resentment dims the land of gold.
Behold, my lord, pray, on the other hand,
The smiles of gods are lighting up thy tents.
Direct thy vassal, then, to wield thine arms
And start anon to slay the Raksha vile.
My lord discreet, command of God, I ask,
How slightest thou, for ever wont to tread
The path of virtue? Tell me why today
Thou driftest to the corrupt course of vice?
Who kicks a jar of gold that augers well?"
Heroic Bibhishan, the friend of Ram,
Rejoined, "With Lakshman I agree, my lord.
The son of Ravan, dread of god and man,
Is brave, indeed, like herald grim of death:
But groundless surely is thy fear today.
For thus I dreamt, O best of Raghu's race :—
Imperial Lakshmi of the Rakshas' clan
Ahead of me appeared and with her beams
Effulgent lighted up the tents, and said
"Bibhishan, pride of pomp and gross conceit
Inflate thy brother's heart. I ever shun
A wicked world and long to leave it soon.
In filthy water can a lily bloom?

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Can stars adorn the sky by clouds obscured ?
By merits, howe'er, of thy previous birth
Thou hast secured the favour of the gods.
The vacant throne, the parasol, the staff
Are therefore thine by right. I just install,
As Rakshas' king, thyself, by fates ordained.
O Raksha crowned with fame, at break of day,
Brave Lakshman, shall thy nephew Meghnad slay.
Assist him in the fight and carry out
The gods' command, O would-be Lanka's king !"
Awakened I arose and found the tent
Was filled with fragrance of the heavenly woods.
I heard celestial music in the sky
Afar. Astonished, at the gate of camp,
A figure sweet and graceful I beheld,
The image that allures god Shiva's heart
(The deity who subdued the god of love).
Her head was screened with thick and waving locks
That looked like clouds. The hair was decked with gems
Whose lustre shamed the lightning in the sky.
I stared ; but, lo ! the mother of the world
At once dissolved and melted from my sight.
In vain I lingered there with thirsty eyes,
To catch a glimpse of her bewitching face
Again. O Dashrath's son, I therefore beg
With Lakshman bid me go to Ravan's son
Who with due sacrifice at Nikumbhil
Invokes the fire-god. Noble prince, obey
The mandate of the gods : and I vouchsafe
To thee thy brother's success in the strife."

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With streaming eyes the lord of Sita said,
"When past events I do recall to mind,
They make me weep, O best of Rakshas' race.
My valued brother, then, to ocean vast
Of peril, how may I consign, my friend?
Through my misfortune, when the heartless queen,
My mother Kekai sought the evil path
Carved out for her by scheming Manthara :—
When, out of deference to my father's vow,
I had to bow before his will and quit
My kingdom, brother Lakshman, led by love
Fraternal, minded not the joy which youth
And grandeur bring, and shadowed close my heels.
Sumitra mother mourned. In seraglio
Which topped the palace, as she got the news,
My brother's wife Urmila wept aggrieved.
In vain the citizens tried to hold him back.
Sumitra mother cried, (her words, e'en now
Are ringing in mine ears)—what magic art
Of thine, O Ram, hath won to thee my son
Whom like the apple of mine eye I prized?
But, pray, preserve with care my precious gem.
Fore-going cares of Sita's rescue, hence,
Friend, let me exit back to Dandak woods.
For who can fight the son of Ravan brave,
The terror of the demons, men and gods?
The hero Sugriv wielding mighty arms :
Prince Angad, dexterous in the arts of war :
The gallant Hanu valiant like his sire,
(The god of wind) : and comet-like in hue
Dhumraksha, fiery, hot and brave and grim ;
Keshari, Nal and Neel like lions dread

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And other heroes who the gods outmatch
In strength: thyself with me combined :—
Fall back before the might of Ravan's son !
How can, then, Lakshman, fight with him alone ?
Allured by words of hope, the siren false,
In vain we crossed the boundless sea, it seems."
Anon a voice, the daughter of the sky,
Proclaimed from heaven in gentle accents thus:—
"O lord of Sita, favourite of the gods,
Is it becoming on thy part to doubt
The statement of the gods? Presumest thou
To slight the god's command? Pray, look up there."
Surprised the hero saw a deadly snake
Combating fiercely with a peacock huge
In welkin which was rent by turns by screams
And hisses of the rivals in the air.
The shadow of the wings like clouds obscured
The sky, and venom in the centre flamed
Like Pralay fire which burns to end the world.
A dreadful battle lasted for a while;—
Resulting in a din by which disturbed
The breakers raised their head and roared aloud;
But in the end the peacock breathed his last
And dropped, The dragon dire in triumph hissed.
Remarked thus Ravan's brother; "With thine eyes
An anomaly thou hast just beheld.
It bears a meaning; lord of Sita, pause.
No juggler's trick in heavens hath hoaxed thy sight.
But gracious gods were pleased to take a leaf

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From that eventful book the Future bears,
And hold it up before thine eyes.
Sumitra's son shall surely slay his foe
And thus rid Lanka of her gallant son."
Impressed with genuineness of these remarks
The best of Raghu's line took heart of grace,
Arose and to his tents advanced. With arms
The gods had sent, he hid his brother's frame
Who glowed like Kartik, foe of Tarak vile.
Bright armour decked his chest: a flashing sword
Hung loose beneath his radiant belt: a shield
Like halo of the sun adorned his back:
A quiver fine with skill artistic framed
Was to his zone attached; diadem bright
To whose construction, sun-beams, as it were,
Had lent their aid flashed on his head and moved:
The lion thus in fury shakes his mane.
Equipped with arms divine the hero beamed
Like sun and from his tent emerged in haste,
Incited like a charger by the call
Of horns which blow and swell the tide of war.
Bibhishan, warrior dauntless, in his turn
Appeared to join his friend. The gods above
Rained flowers on their head. Auspicious muse
Was heard in heaven: celestial damsels danced:
And shouts announcing success filled anon
The sky, the earth, the world beneath our feet.
With hands combined and head upturned, the sage,
The best of Raghu's line, thus humbly prayed:—
"O mother, at thy lotus feet today
The wretched Rama harbour seeks aggrieved.

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Forget not, goddess, me (thy vassal meek).
I need not boast of sacrifice I made
The cause of virtue to uphold on earth.
Unworthy as I am, on me bestow
A boon, O spouse of Shiva, lord supreme
Who conquered death. Reward my sacrifice
By shielding brother, dearer than my life,
Unripe in age, a good and noble boy,
From perils of the war with Rakshas dread.
Benignant goddess, foe of Mahish vile,
As demons thou didst trample with thy feet
The gods to shield in days of yore, chastise
The truculent Raksha with thy valour great
And thus preserve thy humble vassal here."
The Rakshas' foe with reverence and esteem
Adored the goddess thus. Anon the sky,
The bearer of the sound, conveyed with glee
The prayer to the peak of mount Kailash :
So on its wings the merry zephyr bears
The perfume to the royal palace high.
Complacent Indra gently smiled ; the wind
Encouraged lent its motion to the sky.
The prayer reached the Mountain's child aloft
Who said, "Amen !" and blessed the hero Ram.
The cheerful dawn amain the Orient crowned,
And chased away the darkness of the world,
As hope allures the heart, and thus dispels
The gloom of grief. The bird in bowers coo-ed :
The humming bee, the honey-sucker, rushed :
And as the night serenely passed away,
A single planet, bright as countless stars

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Illumed Aurora's sweet and dusky brow,
While stars in shape of flowers adorned her lock.
Accosting Bibhishan, Ram thus observed
"My friend, proceed with care. Thy Rama poor
To thee entrusts a gem, his brother dear,
Whose life and death upon thy mercy hang."
Bibhishan hero cheered the archer Ram
And fore-told Lakshman's success in the fight.
Sumitra's son next bowed before his feet
And with his friend proceeded to his goal.
In clusters dismal clouds obscured them both,
As fogs at dawn in season cold besiege
The peak of mountain. Screened from public gaze
The heroes in a pair to Lanka rushed.
The deity Maya, on her part, advanced
To gracious royal Lakshmi, in her shrine
Disguised as Rakshas' wedded damsel fair.
The latter (wife of Vishnu) queried thus,
"O goddess great, thy pleasure I await."
The artful goddess of energy thus,
"O child of ocean, pray withhold thy might
(Which shields the lord of Lanka from his foe)
Today : for Lakshman in a godly guise
Intends to enter Lanka to destroy his foe,
Conceited Meghnad, who at Nikumbhil
With sacrifice invokes the god of fire.
Like fire destructive is thy valour, nymph,
Which bars the foe's admission to the land.
Hence, deity gentle and benign, relent
And confer boons on Ram, to help his cause."

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Nymph Lakshmi heaved a sigh and thus observed
"O mother whom the world reveres, who can
Presume to thwart thy will? But hearken, pray.
My soul laments to think of Ravan's fate.
For with esteem the faithful Rakshas' lord
Attended by his queen adores my feet.
Much as my heart condoles with him, I can't
Restrain the movements of the wheels of time,
Which, prompted by his sins, will cause his death.
Defying dangers in the way, Sumitra's son
Shall enter Lanka; for I curb my might,
And bless the hero who will surely slay
The son of Ravan, terror of his foe."
With morning dews besprinkled like a flower
In bloom, the goddess Lakshmi quick withdrew
Towards the western gate. And Maya, too,
The wanton damsel, followed in her wake.
Nymph Lakshmi cursed the land of gold: and lo!
The groves of plantain dried anon: the jars
Auspicious brake: the moisture of the soil
Was sucked by heat: and as at break of day
The lunar rays dissolve in solar orb,
The lustre of the universe con-verged
And melted at fair Lakshmi's lotus-feet.
Poor Lanka, like a snake that lost the gem
Which decked its head, forfeited all her grace.
Afflicted at the sight, the earth was moved:
The distant clouds with peals announced their woe;
On plea of rain profuse, the welkin wept;
To top the list, the lord of water roared.
The heavenly nymphs in pair the rampart scaled

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And saw Sumitra's son in god's disguise,
Who like the lord of day appeared :—obscured
By mist in clusters or by heaps of smoke.
Bibhisham Raksha shadowed close his heels,
In fight resistless, as the wind attends
The god of fire. As in a forest dense
The tiger, (when the beast perceives a fawn,)
Concealed in ambush makes a cautious move
And bides his time ; or as the ravenous shark,
Unseen, perceiving from the river's bed
A person (bathing on its lonely coast,)
Advances to his prey like wheels of death,
So Lakshman brave, attended by his friend
With guarded footsteps marched to slay the foe,
Whose doom was sealed, as gods had preordained.
Sweet Lakshmi sighed : and parting from her mate
The goddess Maya, home she went in haste
And wept aggrieved. The earth absorbed the flood
Of tears she shed, as sucks with care the shell
The water trickling from the eye of clouds
Which, later on, the form of pearl assumes,
When star Arcturus in the sky prevails.
By Maya shielded, both the heroes, then,
The city entered. Lakshman oped the gates
Which sounded loud, as if the thunder pealed.
But no one heard the noise. The Rakshas brave
By Maya hoaxed did not perceive at all
Two enemies there who roamed like spies of death
Or lurked like serpents in a flower gay.
Astonished, round him Lakshman saw anon

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Four sections of the army at the gates :—
The horse, the foot, the gallant charioteers,
And stout and grim as myrmidons of hell,
The elephant-drivers. Like the fatal fire
A radiant light the azure welkin scaled.
The frightened hero saw a Raksha strong
Named Virupaksha bright and dread as fire,
(The element all-consuming), tall as Sal
And armed with iron-arrows most acute,
Possessing shanks which vie with palm in height,
And stalwart as the wielder of the club,
The foe of Moor. And by his side he saw
Kalnemi mounted on an elephant huge
Who looked like death himself in flesh and blood :
Expert in war, Pramatta, by his side,
Inspired with zeal and passion for the war ;
Chikhura next who looked like Yakshas' lord
And various other warriors who inspired
Fear in the heart of demons, men and gods.
Abutted on the margin of the road,
(Sumitra's son in speechless awe beheld),
Unnumbered golden castles, temples, shops,
Gay fountains, pools and gardens, spirited steeds
In stables, elephants mighty in their sheds,
Theatres, stages studded all with gems
Which borrowed grace and lustre from the sky,
And countless chariots blazing bright like fire
And armories and magazines of arms.
What pen could sketch the glory of the land,
The greed of god, the sore of demons' eyes ?
Who can, indeed, the gems of ocean count,
Or stars which deck the heaven ? The hero saw

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Amazed, the royal palace in the heart
Of golden Lanka. Columns in a row
Displayed their matchless pomp and touched the sky.

Fine ivory and flashing gold adorned
The gates and windows of the mansion high,
As solar rays illumine flakes of snow.
Astounded Lakshman gently thus addressed
Bibhishan warlike thus, "Thy brother, friend,
Is blessed, indeed, the fountain-head supreme
Of royal greatness unsurpassed on earth !"
The Raksha heaved a sigh and answered thus,
"Thy words are apt, O hero, I admit.
Such vast resources none else can command.
But grandeur of the world, please bear in mind,
Conforming to the law by nature fixed,
Is fleeting like the currents of the sea.
O best of heroes, now in haste proceed,
Slay Ravan's son, thy purpose thus achieve,
And draining deep the nectar of renown
Secure immortal life." With paces swift,
Which others failed to trace, by goddess' grace
The heroes passed and witnessed pleasing sights.
For instance, Lakshman on the way beheld
A Raksha damsel (with a jar of gold
She bore beneath her delicate arms) indulge
In sweetest smiles beside a merry pool
Which teemed with blooming lilies in the morn.
The soldiers of the sturdy infantry
Awoke, regardless of their floral beds
And blew on horns announcing peep of dawn.
With back well-furnished with a stately throne

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The elephant roared and clasped the dumb-bell
tight,
The huge proboscis hanging from his head.
The charioteer with care equipped the car
(Surmounted by a golden flag) with arms.
The matin music flourished in the shrines,
Delightful as the concert in our land
When gods descend in glory to the earth,
To worship Vishnu. Culling flowers in heaps,
(Like Aurora, companion of the rose)
The female florist passed, and thus diffused
Sweet fragrance round the land, and lit the sides
With lustre of her charms : some fair one held
A vessel bright of curd and milk. The din
Increased in volume. Citizens all were roused.
Part said, " O brethren, quickly scale the wall.
For if we fail to reach our goal in time,
The space to suffocation filled will leave
No room for us, to watch the fight today.
The hero Meghnad in his armour clad
Shall to our eyes a blessed sight afford !"
Retorted others thus in deep conceit,
" We need not scale the heights, to see the fight
At all, for in a trice the prince shall slay
Both Ram and Lakshman in the field of war.
For who can coolly meet his arrows keen
Which shall consume his foes, as fire bright
Reduces hay to ashes ? He shall crush
The wretch Bibhishan by his might supreme
And bind him, later on, with fetters fast :
And last with laurels crowned to Ravan's court
(Where we had rather go at once, my friends,)
He shall proceed, his favours to secure."

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A poet with his quill can hardly sketch
The scenes the worthy hero witnessed there.
Endowed with heavenly might and form divine
And wielding with his hands celestial arms,
Of success sure, the hero smiled at heart,
And, led by Bibhishan, advanced with glee.
At last he reached his goal at Nikumbhil
Where hero Indrajit, in solitude,
Was seated on a mat of holy grass.
A silken cloth and sheet adorned his frame:
And sandal-marks, his brow: a garland gay
Adorned his stately neck : frank-incense burnt :
And sacred ghee sustained the lighted lamps
In numbers : flowers, scattered, decked the floor
With rhinocero' horns devised with skill
The costly jars designed for sacrifice
Contained the Ganges-water to the brim,
The liquid which destroys the sins of man.
There lay a golden bell beside his seat ;
And in a golden utensil were kept
Ingredients adapted to the vow.
Secluded thus the best of heroes sat,
And steeped in holy thoughts, as on the peak
Of mount Kailash, the lunar-crested god,
The lord of ascetics, is immersed in yog.
There like a tiger grim, (the spy of death)
Who, famished, to the cow-pen bends his way,—
Protected by the might of Maya great,
The hero Lakshman quickly made his way.
The sword in scabbard rattled ; arrows keen
And quivers clattered, (struck against the shield).
The temple trampled by the warrior shook !

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The son of Ravan, starting, oped his eyes
And saw before him bright as mid-day sun
A hero vested with a form divine.
The warrior lay him prostrate on the ground,
And spake with folded hands :—"O god of fire,
In moments lucky, I, thy vassal here,
Adored thy feet which, therefore, thus have graced
The land of Lanka. But, effulgent lord,
In guise of Lakshman, foe of Rakshas, why
Hast thou appeared to cheer thy bondsman meek ?
This wanton mood of thine, O lord, explain."
And as he spake, he kow-towed low again.
With martial zeal inspired, the hero dread,
The son of Dashrath answered :—"Mark with care !
No god of fire thou see'st, Ravan's son.
My name is Lakshman sprung from Raghu's line.
I mean to slay thee. Come on, fight with me."
As passing by the way, a traveller halts,
To see a serpent with uplifted hood,
The hero quite bewildered Lakshman eyed.
Fear mighty quelled today a fearless heart :—
As fire a lump of iron solid melts,
Or as the demon Rahu clouds the sun,
Or as the heat of summer sucks the sea,
Or as dread Kali haunts the frame of Nal.
The hero rubbed his eyes and thus exclaimed :—
"If truly thou art Rama's brother—pray,
What skilful means thou didst adopt today
To enter Lanka ? For its gates are watched
By countless heroes armed with weapons keen.

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And sharp whose sight subdues the mighty heart
Of Yakshas' king ! The rampart of the town,
Colossal like a hill, is watched with care
By warriors moving like the wheels of fire.
When gods above are daunted by our might,
What magic art a mortal can perform
These Rakshas to delude ? O god of fire,
Who with thy blaze alone couldst end the world,
Why temptest thou thy servant with thy tricks ?
My merry lord, what means thy wanton mood ?
Look ! still the door is shut. I crave a boon,
O lord, as usual, from thy gracious self.
I want to render free, my land of birth,
From fear and danger, Rama to despatch,
To chase away Kis-Kindha's sovereign vile,
And bind Bibhishan wretch and bring him here
As captive of the war before the king.
The clarion, blowing, calls the troops to arms :
I beg thy leave : delay may grieve my host."
Sumitra's son disguised as god thus said,
"I am thy death, O wicked Ravan's son !
A mortal snake that dwells beneath the ground
With fangs creates a passage for itself
And thus emerging to the surface plain,
Assuredly bites a person doomed to die !
Impelled by foul conceit, by luck endowed
With strength divine, thou hast the face, O wretch,
To flout the mighty gods ? Disaster dire,
Destructive villain, visits thee at last !
By gods' command I challenge thee to fight !"
Anon he held his dread and naked sword
Which like the flame of fatal fire flashed

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And dazed the eye and, like the thunder charged
Wilh lightning held by Indra, shone ablaze.
Amazed the son of Ravan thus replied,
"If thou art Lakshman wielding arms divine,
Rama's younger brother truly,—I accept
Thy challenge. In a moment I will try
To quench the thirst of war, which led thee here.
Hath ever Indra's victor known defeat?
But, hero, though thou art the Rakshas' foe,
I meet thee here as honored guest of mine
Whom bound by ethical maxims I should cheer.
Pray, therefore, rest awhile beneath my roof:
And bear in mind the practice of the war.
A Kshatriya, thou, as law of honour bids,
Canst never hurt a foe devoid of arms.
With thy permission, hence, I mean to pass
And fetch the weapons from the armoury
And put on armour suited to the fight."
Sumitra's son thus thundered like a cloud,
"If in his net the lucky hunter finds
A tiger struggling hard for his release,—
Can he relent and set him free, o wretch?
The rules of war I reck not in thy case.
A Raksha vicious most thou art by birth,
Whom I must kill by methods, foul or fair."
Like Abhi-Manyu who was deep incensed
And glowed like red-hot iron-piece to find
That warriors seven in number at a time
Beset him fast, the Raksha was enraged
And said :—"I cry upon thee fie and shame,
O Lakshman, blot on noble Kshatri race.
The Khsatris brave shall block their ears to hear
Thy name accurst: for like a thief today

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Admission to my house thou hast obtained.
How thee, O wicked thief, I will chastise
And wrench by force thy weapons, just observe !
If to an eagle's nest the serpent hies,
His days are numbered ; for the reptile doomed
Can never hope to go back to his hole.
And who, O wretch, despatched thee to this place ?"
With anger flushed the hero raised anon
The jars of water and with a hideous shout
At Lakshman hurled them with his might.
The latter, struck severely, fell and swooned,
As down comes with a mighty creak and crash
A tree gigantic pulled out by the storms.
The godly weapons clattered, sharp and keen :
The temple shook, as if by earth-quake moved ;
Pure blood gushed forth in streams. The sword divine
In vain the Raksha hero tried to lift,
Or wrest the mighty bow from Lakshman's hands,
Or move the shield or quiver from his grasp.
So tries in vain the elephant with his trunk
To drag the summit from a mountain high.
For spell of Maya who can ever quell ?
Cut to the quick, the hero next advanced
Towards the gate and there astonished saw
His uncle, dire Bibhishan armed with dart,
And looking ominous like a comet grim.
Chastiser of his foes, the prince exclaimed :—
"At last the riddle I have solved, alas !
By what device to Lanka Lakshman came.
For here I find the author of the wrong.
But was this act, my uncle, nobly done ?

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Thy mother is Nikasha chaste, o sire :
Thy brother Ravan crowns the Raksha race :
Thy brother Kumbha-karna armed with spear
Could match god Shambhu : and thy nephew, I
Subdued the mighty Indra, lord of sky !
With such connexions noble in the world,
In name of gracious goodness, to a thief
How pointest thou a clue to thy domain ?
A Chandal thou receivest in thy house
Designed for princes ? But it suits me not
To take to task my sire, my kinsman good.
Clear out from yonder gates, and let me pass
To armory and fetch my weapons sharp,
So that by fighting fairly with my foe,
I may remove the blot from Lanka's face."
Responded thus Bibhishan, "Vain, O sage,
Is thy petition. Can a vassal, I,
Of Ram, an act perform against his will,
Because my nephew bids me ?" Ravan's son,
Afflicted, answered, "uncle, at thy words
I wish to end my life. Vassal thou
Of Ram ! And how could this expression vile
Escape thy lips, indeed, I like to know.
Providence placed the moon on Shiva's head :
And doth the lumar god climb down and roll
Upon the ground besmeared with filthy dust ?
Dost thou forget, O Raksha lord, thy blood,
Thy birth in royal house ? And what is, pray,
This wretched Ram who claims thy homage thus ?
The swan is ever fond of limpid pools
And seldom seeks to court a pond unclean,
Abode of moss. The lion, bear in mind,
By no means thinks a jackal to befriend.

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Thou art a sage, my uncle : I, a fool,
And vassal thine, have much from thee to learn.
That Lakshman is a coward, base in mind,
Or why should he the gauntlet throw to me,
Unarmed ? Pray, is this the rule of war
Which heroes sanction ? Not a child that breathes
In Lanka shall refrain from laugh of scorn
To hear of Lakshman's most disgraceful act.
Permit me passage, weapons to secure:
And how Sumitra's son, e'en helped by gods,
Subdues me in the battle I shall see.
Hast thou not seen the valour with thine eyes
Of thy submissive slave and kinsman here,
While warring with the demons, and the gods ?
Then why should I, a feeble mortal mind ?
The wretch audacious rushed to Nikumbhil
For sacrifice designed. Permit me, sire,
To punish this presumptuous scoundrel for his act.
A dweller in the woods hath dared to tread
Thy native land, as by the fates impelled
Audacious Titans pace the Nandan woods:
Or as in lotus harbour insects vile !
How can thy nephew, I, this affront bear ?
And how dost thou this insult pocket, sire ?"
As talisman subdues the dragon dire
Who bends his hood, the hero was abashed,
And thus responded to his nephew brave :—
"I merit not thy censure, O my child.
For all disasters to his land and kin,
The sinner Ravan hath to thank himself.
As measure of his iniquitous deeds
Is full, behold, the land is sinking deep

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In darkness and beset with peril vast,
Just as the earth is swept by Pralay floods.
Hence prudent motives led me to obtain
At Raghav's blessed feet asylum safe.
For who would perish for his kinsman's faults ?"
Prince Meghnad, Indra's victor, was incensed.
As in the night dark clouds indignant roar,
So loudly thundered Ravan's son, "Thou art
Renowned, O Ravan brother, in the world,
For ways of virtue ever thou hast paced.
Whose moral precepts led thee, uncle, pray,
To sacrifice all ties of blood and caste ?
The shastras hold, "A kinsman, although vile,
One ought to prefer to a stranger good."
This golden maxim ever guides the sage :
For stranger is a stranger, after all :
And thicker far is blood than water pure.
For doctrines, most perverted, thou dost hold
Thy comrades, O my uncle, are to blame,
Whose contact vile, no doubt, hath turned thy head.
But my reproach is falling flat, it seems :
As 'mongst the thorns no crops can ever grow."
At this important stage, Sumitra's son
Through Maya's care revived and bent his bow;
And, aiming weapons sharp, he bored the heart
Of mighty Indrajit, as Kartik brave,
(A lattice framing with his arrows keen),
Pierced demon Tarak in the golden age.
Blood gushed like cascades flowing fast
From rocks in gurgles and besmeared his garb.
Perplexed with pain severe, the hero held
The conches and the bell and objects meant

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For sacrifice and hurled them at his foe,
As Abhimanyu whom the force combined
Of heroes seven, dis-armed employed by turns
As tools to meet his rivals in the fight :—
The wheels, the summit of his broken car,
The crumbling sword and armour, tattered shields,
Or anything he could secure by chance.
But Maya, goddess of illusion shrewd,
With arms outstretched the objects tightly grasped
And brushed them all aside, as with the wave
Of hands, the tender mother sweeps the gnats
That swarm around her precious baby's neck.
In anger and despair, the Raksha roared
And rushed at Lakshman like a lion fierce
Who meets his assailant before his eyes !
Be-wildered by the spell of Maya great,
The hero Meghnad saw beside him close,
Towards the north, the South, the East, the West,
Yama, the god of hell, who holds the mace
And rideth on the horned buffalo,
God Vishnu graced with four-fold emblem named
The conch, the discus, lotus, and the spear :
And other gods, in countless numbers grouped
Who moved on cars, and flickered here and there.
Upheaving sighs of grief the hero stood
And looked dejected like the moon eclipsed
By Rahu dread and void of digits bright ;
Or like a lion trapped in fowler's net.
Effulgent Lakshman, then, his arrow cased,
And grasped his sword. The sheath with lustre flashed !

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The dazzled prince, the conqueror of the worla,
Struck by the sword, was steeped in gore profuse.
And with a thud he fell and rolled upon the
ground.
The earth vibrated; Neptune roared incensed;
A din tremendous rose and filled the world.
The heaven, the earth, the land beneath our
feet
Which gods and mortals people, struck with
awe,
Suspected danger grave and fatal to the world.
Anon, like summit of a martial car
Which, blown by engines, drops beside its
wheels,
The diadem of the dying prince, by chance
Was swept away by sportive winds and dropped
Before the throne of Rakshas King in state
Who, frightened, called upon his god for help.
Pramila's right eye quivered, off and on.
The damsel unawares, and off her guard,
Effaced vermilion-dots which decked her brow;
Queen Mandodari swooned without a cause.
In mother's lap reposing children screamed,
As wept aggrieved in Vraja cow-herd boys
When Krishna, favourite of the juvenile band
Of rustics who his grace superb admired,
Left Vraja, Nanda's home for Madhupur,
And Gokul in his absence pined in gloom.
The hope of Rakshas' race, the foe of gods,
By means unfair thus levelled to the ground
Addressed his rival :—Fie and shame on
thee
A hundred times, thou blot on Rakshas race,

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Sumitra's son ! Begot by Ravan brave
I fear not death. What rends my heart indeed !
Is this, O wretch, thy weapons end my life.
Did I the demons and the gods subdue
To court destruction from thy feeble hands ?
I know not how the cruel, heartless fates
I wronged, to merit this chastisement hard.
Through grief I can not freely speak my mind :
But when the Rakshas' lord obtains this news,
Who can in all the world preserve thy life ?
The royal wrath like dreadful marine fire
Shall find thee out in ocean's bed profound,
If there, O poltroon, thou dost choose to hide.
And if to forests dense thou rush afraid,
Like wild-fire shall his might consume thy frame !
Night shall not hide thee in her mantle dark.
Among the demons, men and gods, O wretch,
Assuredly none shall shield thee from his ire.
Besides, the stigma on thy character
Shall ever brand thy name and fair renown."
The virtuous hero at the close of life
Called to his mind his parents' blessed feet.
The blood combined with ceaseless stream of tears
Engulfed the Terra in a crimson pool.
Fair Lanka's lotus sun, resplendent star,
In zenith of his glory, thus declined,
As fire hides its flame, or as the moon
By rays abandoned meekly courts the gloom.
With streaming eyes, thus Ravan's brother cried,
"O hero vested with gigantic arms,
On velvet cushions, thou was wont to place
Thy head, and lie on soft and silken couch.

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What irony of fate hath brought thee low ?
For now I find thee tumbling on the ground,
Imagine how the monarch Ravan great,
Or Mandodari, chief of all his queens,
Or good Nikasha, Ravan's mother old,
Or Pramila, delightful like the moon,
Or her attendants, Diti's offspring fair
Who vie in beauty with the nymphs of heaven,
And Raksha nobles all will feel disposed
To see thee prostrate lie on such a couch ?
Why, then, O diadem of the Rakshas race,
Thus rollest thou on floor and court'st the dust ?
Arise, O nephew dearer than my life,
Forsake thy wretched bed, and cheer mine eyes
Which long to see thy face again. Pray, why
To uncle's call thou art so deaf ? Arise !
Thy wishes to the letter I shall bide.
The gates I will unlock and let thee pass
To armory. Thy weapons use, I pray,
And thus score out the blot from Lanka's face.
O Rakshas' pride, at noon can Phoebus bright,
The light of all the world, decline in gloom ?
Is it becoming Lanka's glorious orb
That in the hey-day of his power and pomp
He should in wretched garb go down to rest ?
The sounding horns invoke thee, list, to war :
The elephants trumpet : spirited charger neighs :
And muster thick the Raksha troops for fight !
O terror of the demons, gods and men,
Hark ! How the foe is thundering at the gates
Of Lanka. Rise, and shield her with thy might."

Lamented thus aloud Bibhishan brave :

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In his bereavement sad, Sumitra's son
Condoled with him and said, "Restrain thy woe,
O summit glorious of the Raksha race!
For can this grief avail thee, friend, at all?
Besides, ordained by fates, the hero died,
For which thou need not grumble or repine
Or blame thyself. Now start with me, I beg,
To Raghav's camp where with an anxious heart
He longs to see me, vassal of his feet.
There flourishes in the heavens, O hero, list,
Auspicious music." And he heard a sound
Delightful as in dream. In haste they passed,
As in the absence of a tigress fierce
The fowler slaughtering in the den her cub
With hurricane motion gasping runs away
To save his skin, suspecting that the beast
Whose offspring lovely he hath thus despatched
Might rush incensed and bound upon him fast:
Or as the son of Drona, Aswa-thama brave,
In Pandav's tent destroying children five
Who lay in sweet repose at dead of night,
As speedy as the mind, with fear and joy,
To Duryodhan, the king of Kurus, ran
Whose thighs were shattered in the battle-field
Of Kurukshetra. Screened from public view
By Maya's grace, the heroes both advanced
To where lay Sita's valiant lord encamped.
In meek submission bowed Sumitra's son
And thus accosted Ram with clasped hands
"Thy blessings, worthy gem of Raghu's race,
Have crowned my head with laurels in the fight,
For hero Maghnad, now, is dead and gone!"

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With streaming eyes, lord Raghav kissed his brow,
Embraced him with affection and exclaimed :—
"O best of those endowed with mighty arms,
Thy hands secured for me the goal I sought!
Our mother Sumitra and Dashrath sire,
The gem of Raghu's race, who thee begat,
Myself (thy elder brother), and my land
Of birth, Ayodhya fair, are blessed, indeed!
For ever shall the world thy fame proclaim!
But greet, mine own, the gods who give us strength.
For frail is man: his might avails him not,
Unless the gods assist. A man may work,
But heaven alone rewards him for his acts"
The hero, next addressed Bibhishan thus,
His friend most intimate and close :—"My dear,
In lucky moments thee I have secured
In Rakshas' land. Thou art in Rakshas guise
The emblem of the welfare of my race!
O mine of good supreme, thy virtues rare
Which all admire, have fully won my heart.
The sun is lord of planets, I admit;
But thee I rightly hold as prince of friends.
Pray let us go and greet the goddess great,
Most gracious Gouri."-Gods amain with glee
Rained flowers from the sky: the band announced
The success of the arms of Sita's lord,
In all directions. Lanka, land of gold,
Reposing sweetly like a princess gay
And building fancy castles in the air,
Affrighted, started on her bed of rose!

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BOOK VII.

RAVAN'S REVENGE.

The sun ascended now the Peak of Rise
And gazed around; as laid in lotus leaves,
Appeased lord Brahma opes his lily eyes
And glances at the world. With flowers crowned
And wreathed with dews the earth in raptures smiled.
As with auspicious music temples ring
On festive days, the ladies' fragrant bower
Resounded with the note of harmony.
The lotus blue in pool transparent glowed:
Her co-wife sun-flower decked the merry coast.
As in nocturnal dews the blossom dips
Itself, Pramila washed her nimble frame
In liquid pure and braided next her hair.
A row of pearls adorned her raven lock,
As streaks of moon-beam deck the autumn clouds.
With fore-arms delicate like the lotus-stalks,
The damsel held the bracelet set with gems
And neck-lace brilliant framed with costly gold.
But as she put them on, she felt a sense
Of vague oppression round her tender limbs.
Astonished thus she asked her bosom friend
Vasanti, verdant like the season spring:—
"Companion fair, I donot know the cause
Why ornaments my person cannot bear!
A distant wail in Lanka rends mine ear;
And boding further evil to our cause

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My right eye, look, is quivering off and on !
My soul laments ; a peril I suspect ;
Hence, prithee hasten to my lord of life
At Nikumbhil, where Yajna is performed,
And tell him that his spouse with folded hands
Requests he must not start to fight today,
A day unlucky, as by signs I guess."
She paused like violin. Answered thus her mate :
"The wail increases : list, my pretty lass !
Why citizens thus lament, I cannot say.
Let both of us proceed to yonder shrine
Where Mandodari queen devoutly prays
Parvati's lord, the god so quick to please.
With martial zeal inspired, the noble horse,
The elephant-drivers, warriors using cars,
The archers, foot, and other gallant troops,
Are passing in procession through the streets.
O damsel crowned with graceful locks, thy lord,
To try conclusions with his foe in war,
Puts on his coat-of-mail at Nikumbhil.
How can at present I the hero see ?
No interview is possible at this stage."
The ladies in despair their programme changed
And anxious hastened to the famous shrine
Where Ravan's queen, beloved Mandodari,
Was on her son's behalf engaged in rites.

In Kailash, Shiva lord, dejected sat,
Upheaved a sigh, and thus addressed his spouse,
(The goddess of a bright and golden hue),
"Beloved, purpose thine hath been achieved.
In battle fatal, prince of heroes' line,
The mighty Meghnad hath been put to death,

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At Nikumbhil (the shrine of sacrifice),
By Lakshman helped by Maya's craft divine.
O beauty moon-like, darling, bear in mind,
Adherent faithful mine is Lanka's lord :
Whose grief, so shocking, makes my heart to bleed.
The wound inflicted by a son's decease
Upon the father's mind is deeper far,
Nay, painful more a hundred thousand times,
Than injuries my trident dire may cause.
Time cannot heal, indeed, a sore so foul !
Conceive, my love, the shock the wound shall cause
To Ravan's mind,—to which he may succumb,
Unless I plans devise to bear him out.
Have I not Indra pleased at thy request ?
Now, prithee, let me look to Ravan's grief."
The goddess answered, "Let thy will be done,
O foe of Tripur. Indra's cherished wish
Hath been fulfilled by thee on my account,
I grant. But, lord supreme, forget it not
A votary staunch of mine is Dashrath's son.
Thy vassal, I remind thee of the fact :
And further boon I venture not to crave.."
The deity smiled and called Bir-bhadra brave
And hideous, who appeared and touched his feet
And bent his head that prostrate rolled on ground.
Spake Shiva thus :—"In Lanka's war, my child,
The hero Indrajit was slain today,
By Lakshman's doughty arms at Nikumbhil
Through Gouri's grace benign. The heralds fear
The tidings sad and dismal to convey
To Rakshas' lord. Besides, they donot know
What skill Sumitra's valiant son devised

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To slay the violent Raksha. But a god
Who can perceive the tactics of a god ?
O mighty hero, hie to Lanka, please,
Disguised as Raksha herald, and sustain
With Rudra's might Nikasha's son today."
Bir-bhadra brave across the ether passed ;
Ethereal animals bowed to him with awe
Whose beam eclipsed the Sun, the lord of day,
That lights the moon with his resplendent rays.
The shadow of his dart obscured the earth :
The sea adored him with a din profound.
The hero quick alighted at the land of gold
Which trampled by his feet with violence shook,
Like branches of a tree which creaking fall,
Moved by the wings of Eagle, bird divine.
The hero rushed to Nikumbhil and saw
With streaming eyes, laid prostrate on the ground,
The prince, still verdant like a Palas tree
Uprooted by the winds among the woods.
See how a god is moved by mortal's woe !
In herald's guise the hero soon arrived
At royal council, where the Raksha king
Was seated on a golden throne in pomp
And looked like god of fire in ashes hid.
With plea of bowing low, he blessed the king
And stood up there with clasped hands and wept.
Astonished thus the king enquired :—"I pray,
O herald, why thy tongue is loth today
Its mission to fulfil ? Thou servest not
The human being, Ram. Messenger, speak
What means, then, this dejected look of thine ?
The victor of the demons and the gods,
The lotus-sun of Lanka, land of gold,

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Today is getting ready for the war.
What evil news, then, can thy tongue proclaim ?
If Rama crushed by violent thunder-strokes
Hath perished in the war, announce the news
So that thy coffer I may fill with coins".
Thus answered Shiva's myrmidon disguised :—
"Alack-a-day ! How can a wretch like me
The tidings sad may venture to announce,
Unless the safety of thy bondsman here
Thou do guarantee, nobie Rakshas' lord ?"
The monarch answered with an anxious heart :
"I do ! I do ! O herald, speak it out :
For know the good, the evil both are caused
By Fate, the fountain-head of all events."
Responded thus the hero in disguise :—
"O foremost in thy line, the Rakshas' pride
And glory, Meghnad perished in the war !"
The king in council dropped, as in the woods
A lion pierced by fowler's arrows keen
With roar tremendous, gasping courts the ground.
The ministers bewailed and round him stood ;–
Some fanned him : others, water cool secured.
The godly herald, then, revived the king
Who flared up like red-powder touched by flames
Of fire. He took his seat and said
"Declare, O herald, quick who put to death
Invincible Indrajit, my valiant son."
The god, disguised, responded thus :—"O king,
Sumitra's gallant son in masquerade
Entered Nikumbhil, shrine of sacrifice,
And killed the hero by unlawful means.
I saw the prin ce laid prostrate in the fane

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And looking verdant like a Palas tree
Uprooted by the winds amongst the woods.
Dispel thy grief, O best of heroes' race,
With deeds heroic : let frail ladies wail
And soak the earth with pool of sacred tears.
Destroy the traitor (who by methods foul
Hath killed thy son) and thus avenge thyself."
With this remark, the herald disappeared :
When, lo ! a perfume heavenly filled the place.
Besides, the trident and the clotted hair
Of Shiva, deity, flashed before the king.
Adherent of the god, with folded hands,
The monarch bowed and said, "At length, my lord,
Thy vassal, me, hast thou remembered thus ?
Unlucky me ! A silly wretch, alas !
Thy subtle purpose how can I divine ?
But first thy mandate let me carry out,
O lord all-knowing, after which my heart
I shall expose before thy lotus feet."
Indignant and inspired with Rudra's might
The best of Rakshas said, "Let all my force,
(The four divisions of the army vast),
Prepare for combat with the wicked foe.
With currents of the blood in war, I mean
To lay my flame of torture, if I can."
The drum resounded in the council-hall
Like horn announcing end of all the world !
The Rakshas drew them out in war array
Like spectres in the Kailash peak, invoked
By Shiva's clarion, loud and shrill and sharp ;
And Lanka, trampled by the heroes, shook.
Surmounted by bright ensigns cars revolved :

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The dusky elephant grasped the dumb-bell fast,
The huge proboscis : rushed the neighing steed.
With fury Chamar ran, the fear of gods,
In charge of four divisions of his force.
Rushed Udagra with all his charioteers :
And valiant Vaskal with his elephants' band,
Prominent by his grace like Indra armed
With fire and mounted on a sombre cloud :
And Asilom with a shout in charge of horse :
And Viralaksh in charge of gallant foot,
A Raksha dire and dashing in his might.
The standard-bearer rushed and raised the flag
Which glowed like comet crimson in the sky :
The national anthem pealed : the Raksha force
Resembled goddess Durga, (demons' dreaded foe),
Who springing from the might of gods combined,
Prepared for war with savage shouts of joy.
The elephants' band was emblem of her arms :
The horses' movements typified her feet :
The car resembled diadem on her head :
The shield which flashed was emblem of her eye :
The flag set off with gems was like the hem
Of garment, red and glowing, which she wore :
The sound of trumpets typified the roar
She made, to frighten demons dread, her foe :
The dart, the javelin, lance, and dumb-bell thick,
The iron-spear, the pestle, and the club,
The axe, the mace, were emblem of her teeth.
The terra thus disturbed in terror quailed :
The frightened ocean raised its head and roared :
The hills their balance lost : the army dinned

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As if the goddess Chandi born again
Were yelling with a wild and frantic glee.
The son of solar race, Ram, gave a start :
And to his friend Bibhishan thus he spake,
"Behold, by earthquake moved how Lanka fair
Indulges in a dance. There heaps of smoke
Like sombre-clouds obscure the solar god.
A dreadful flame like that of fatal fire
Illumes the ether. Hear how billows roar
And swell as if to swallow all the world."
His friend, the Raksha, white and livid grown
With fear said thus :—My lord, the shake of land
Is due to tramplings of the Rakshas' feet,
And not to earth-quake. Nor the flash is caused
By flames of fatal fire. The golden spark
Of armour mingled with the gleam of arms
Illumes the globe. The din which stuns the ear
Is not the ocean's roar. In martial zeal
The Raksha heroes thunder like the sea.
Afflicted by his son's demise, the king
His army vast to-day invokes to arms.
Pray, how wilt thou this fatal crisis meet
To save Sumitra's son and all thy host?"
In accents gentle Rama answered thus :
"Rouse thyself, my friend, and summon, I entreat,
The leaders of my force : may deities help
And ever shield their humble bondsman, me
In danger who upon their mercy count."
The Raksha there-upon blew upon his horn
To whose shrill notes responding in a trice,
Arrived with elephant's gait Kiskindha's king,

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Brave Angad, expert in the art of war,
With god-like features heroes Nal and Neel,
The warrior Hanu valiant like the wind,
The powerful Jambuvan and Sharav brave,
(The best, indeed, of heroes in the world),
Red-eyed Gavaksh and other leaders dread
Who strike a terror in the Rakshas' heart.
With language suited to their noble rank
The gracious lord the chieftains hailed by turns
And said :—"Afflicted by his son's decease to-day
King Ravan is preparing for the war
With his attendants. Lanka, just behold,
Is quailing, trampled by the warriors' feet.
Ye can assuredly win the heaven, the earth, the hell
By virtue of your might. Then, heroes, on
And shield your Raghav from this peril dire.
By irony of fates, I had to dwell
Secluded from my spouse and kin, so long :
To you, I therefore turn for needed help.
In Lanka warrior one alone survives,
The king of Rakshas, diadem of his race ;
The only thorn that stands across our way :
The rest have perished, victims of your might :
So now I pray, root out this Raksha vile.
O heroes, by your grace I bound the sea
And crumbled Kumbhakarna, Raksha dread,
Who could against god Shambhu hold his own.
Sumitra's son hath likewise in his turn
Destroyed the mighty Meghnad in the shrine,
The terror of the demons, men and gods !
I pray you, now, fulfil your noble part :
Redeem the glory of my former days

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As well as Sita held by Rakshas' wiles.
As with the gold of love ye bought my heart,
Pray bind with ties of gratitude today
The line of Raghu with your acts of grace."
Responded Sugriv with a thundering voice,
"O hero, let me pledge to thee my word,
In battle I or Ravan vile shall fall !
Installed in kingdom by thy mighty hand,
Thy bounties how can I forget in life ?
O fountain of my honour, power and pelf,
Thy grateful vassal, I, shall ever roll
With meekness at thy blessed, lotus feet,
And try my best thy glory to redeem.
All true as steel, among my comrades here,
Can never, (quelled by fear of death), retreat
Or shirk from duty or thy cause forsake.
Let Rakshas come : for we are up in arms."
Indignant roared the generals of the war :
The army Rama's success loud proclaimed.
Incensed at this terrific shout, the foe
Responded with heroic zeal and pealed,
As Durga, by the Danav's cry provoked,
For their chastisement yells with savage glee.
A mighty war-cry filled the land of gold,
Which reached the ears of Lakshmi, royal grace,
Who started to her feet and looked amazed.
The lotus-eyed sweet damsel gazed and saw
With fury blinded Raksha troops prepare
For war on all sides round. The Raksha flag
Raised high its head and kissed the welkin blue,
And spelt disaster to the trembling world.
The Raksha war-drum beat and sounded deep !

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The goddess vested with a lunar face
Advanced through empty space to Indra's court
Which rang with dulcet notes of organ sweet.
Celestial damsels danced : the Kinnars sang :
The king of gods adored by gods and nymphs
And seated on a gorgeous throne of gold
Was floating on a throne of raptures sweet.
His left was decked by Shachi's presence soft :
Eternal vernal winds in whispers blew
And Gandhrvas in flowers steeped the land.
Anon, the spouse of Vishnu graced the hall :
To whom the god of heaven inclining thus,
"I take the dust, O mother, of thy feet
Whose grace hath now the son of Ravan slain :
So, free from terror I shall rule the sky.
O goddess most benign, thy glance alone
Like taste of nectar heals the wound of mind."
Responded thus the smiling goddess fair,
"O demons' foe, the hero died, indeed !
But anxious to avenge the prince's death
Brave Ravan calls his gallant troops to arms :
And laks of Rakshas to his beck respond.
I hasten hence to thee, the news to bring.
Sumitra's son hath served thy cause in need
Most faithfully : it is thy duty now,
Aditi's son, to shield the valiant prince.
A noble-minded person ever keeps
From danger those who helped him in distress.
Hence suited means adopt to save thy friend."
Thus answered Indra, lord of gods, "Look up,
My mother gracious, to the northern gate
Of my celestial kingdom. Loometh large
In yon horizon, mark, my gallant force.

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If Rakshas' lord, O goddess most benign,
By foul ambition led, proceed to war,
The monster I will combat, tooth and nail:
I do not mind him, nymph, without his son."
The goddess with a graceful start beheld,
As far as godly vision would permit,
The army heavenly stationed at the north.
She saw the car, the elephant and the horse,
The foot, the phalanx stout that conquered death,
The Gandarvas who never court defeat,
And last the Kinnars dread like fatal fire.
She saw brave Kartik on a chariot
Whose flag is peacock decked with plumage bright,
And Chitra-rath who moved a checkered car.
Elephants huge like grim and sombre clouds
Beset the sky: while javelins dazed the sight,
And flags like fleeting lightning swept the air.
Like halo of the sun, bright sparks of light
Suffused the armour: shields resplendent shone.
The spouse of Vishnu queried: "Where, O god,
Are gone the regents of the quarters brave,
Without whom graceless looks thine army there?"
Thus Indra, lord of Shachi fair, replied:—
"O mother of the world, today I bade
The regents guard the sides with care:
For gods and Rakshas both unmatched in war,
None knows the upshot of this contest dire.
The earth might sink, perhaps, as in pralay;
Or, all creation may be swept away."
The fair-haired, handsome nymph, lord Vishnu's spouse,
Blessed Indra: and anon she rode in pomp.

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Upon a golden car of clouds and hied
To Lanka back. Her shrine she entered soon
And lighted it with lustre of her frame.
There deep dejected on a lotus throne,
She sat and brooded o'er the Rakshas' woe.
We leave her here and turn to Lanka's king
Who, by vindictive motives led, prepared
For war with zeal. Anon the heroes flocked,
Effulgent like the peak of golden mount,
And armed themselves with warlike weapons bright.

The standard flew: the war-drum beat at hand,
Whose notes invoked the Raksha host to arms.
While this was going on, queen Mandodari
Attended by her maids arrived at court
And dropped afflicted down, and grieved her loss:

So mourns a female pigeon, when she sees
Her nest deserted by the young she reared.
The king of Rakshas raised her with esteem,
And said, "The fates have mocked us, love.
The wretched life I lead is simply meant
To wreak revenge on Ram and Lakshman vile.
Pace back thine way to empty dove-cote, sweet,
And check me not, a pilgrim of the war.
There shall be time enough for us to weep
In future; when our programme will be this,
We both shall sacrifice the pomp of court,
And, hie-ing to the woods, in solitude,
The image of our lovely son enshrine
Most fondly in our heart. Go back, I pray,
To thy recess, my love, and put not out
With tears the flame of ire that warms my frame.

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The Sal (my son) whose grace adorned the woods,
Hath been unjustly levelled to the ground.
The demon (Rahu) swallowed once for all
The graceful moon, the jewel of the sky.
Have patience for a while. Now, fare thee well !"
The waiting maids held up the queen with care
And gently led her to the seraglio.
With anger flushed the Raksha lord emerged
And thus accosted loud his gallant host,
"In combat most unlawful, soldiers brave,
The prince of heroes, by whose might sublime
The Rakshas conquered demons, men and gods,
Whose arrows keen subdued the gods in heaven,
The serpents in Patal and men on earth,
(Unaided and unarmed), in mood devout
While greeting god of fire, was foully slain
By Lakshman vile encroaching, like a thief
Detested, on the shrine for rites designed.
As in a foreign tract, a stranger dies
Without beholding at the time of death
The face of his relations, parents, wife,
The hero, priceless jewel of his race,
Expired in Lanka fair, his native land !
I reared you, heroes, for a period long
As children to whose feelings I appeal
To judge which race excels mine own in fame.
And should I come to this disgraceful pass ?
Inflicting dire defeat on gods and men,
In vain I reared the tree of fair renown,
The basin round whose root consigned by fates
To drought and heat before its proper time
Is getting dry and jejune, day by day.
But fruitless is my grief. For Pluto's heart,

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Like iron solid, melteth not with tears !
I will to battle rush and there chastise
The warrior false, Sumitra's son, a fool
Addicted ever to a course of vice ;
And if my efforts fail, I will retire
And vow to see my native land no more.
My gallant soldiers matchless in the world,
O terror of the demons, men and gods,
Forget not how my son hath met his doom
And, to avenge his death, advance to war.
For who that learns the prince is dead and gone,
The glory of our land, will care to live ?"
The king upheaved a sigh profound and paused.
Indignant and aggrieved the Rakshas roared
And moistened with their tears of woe the earth :
Provoked by that tremendous shout, the host
Of Ram, responding, raised a hue and cry :
The lord of heaven rejoined with thunders loud.
The lord of Sita and his brother brave
And Sugriv, Angad, Hanu, Nal and Neel
And Sharav, death itself of Rakshas dread,
Were deep incensed. The gallant phalanx dinned.
Announcing Rama's success in the war.
Clouds sombre hid the sky, and thundered deep :
And lightning flashed and smiled, like Durga fair
While bent to root out demons dread, her foe.
The sun that darkness chases sank in gloom
Profound : the wind blew sparks of flame :
The wild-fire raged among the woods : the flood
Swept clean the land of gold and havoc caused.
The earth-quake smashed the trees and mansions high :

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And screaming loudly many a creature died.
The Pralay, as it were before its time,
In fury raged, to blow away the world !
With mighty panic filled the goddess Earth
Proceeded to Vaikuntha, Vishnu's land :
And there the lord supreme she thus addressed :--
"O ocean of compassion, me thy slave
Thou hast redeemed from peril many a time,
Assuming different forms. In tortoise' shape,
Thy prowess raised me on thy back in flood
Wherein the world was steeped : and later on,
In tusker's form, O saviour of the poor,
Thou didst sustain me on thy tusk
Wherein I figured like the dot on moon.
Anon, thou didst assume the hideous form
Of Nrisimha, (a man with lion's head),
And thus destroy the demon, vile and dread,
Hiranyakshipu to preserve my life :
Thy dwarfish form subdued king Bali's pride.
I need not dwell upon thy graces more.
Oppressed I seek thy lotus feet again,
And crave protection in an hour of grief."
Thus queried with a smile the foe of Moor :--
"Why thus dejected, thee I see, my child ?
Who torments thee, O mother of the world ?"
And weeping thus responded goddess Earth
"What can thy knowledge screen, omniscient lord ?
For there, behold, how Ravan thirsts for war :
And so doth Raghav : So doth mighty Jove !
Rut-dripping elephants three afflict thy slave,
Who knows no rest, and weeping spends her days.

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Assuming god's disguise, by Maya's grace
Sumitra's son hath slain brave Meghanad.
Perplexed with grief, vindictive Rakshas' lord
Hath vowed to lay his wrath with Lakshman's blood.
But Indra, in his turn, with martial zeal
Inspired, hath vowed to shield his protege.
O god in yellow, in a trice a war
Destructive most, the outcome of the wrath
Of hostile gods and men and Rakshas fierce,
Shall break out and with blood deluge the land.
How, O my lord, this torment can I brook?"
The lord of Lakshmi laughed and looked afar
At Lanka, land of gold. The Raksha force
In countless regiments and divisions four
Was marching in procession, blind with rage.
The van was led by Might which shook the earth:
Next followed Sound,—the peal which stunned the ear.
The rear was led by Dust, in shape of clouds
Which blinded eye-sight. Trodden by the feet
The land of gold in quick succession shook!
Beyond her skirts, the lord supreme observed
The force of Ram. The boisterious winds appeared,
Afar, like waves that lave the ocean's coast.
The lord with lotus eyes beheld:—the gods
Were hastening eager to the land of gold,
As runs the hungry eagle, bird divine,
To find his usual meal, the mortal snakes.
The world resounded with a horrible din:
By which disturbed the hermits ceased to pray,

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And fled in panic. Holding in their arms,
The screaming infants, mothers wept aggrieved :
And children frightened ran on every side.
Elixir to the faithful,—god supreme,
(The swan whom ascetics cherish in their heart),
A moment paused, and thus addressed the earth,
"A peril vast besets thee, damsel chaste :
For Shiva with his might sustains the king,
The chief of Rakshas. I can render thee no aid
Without Parvati's lord whom thou shouldst see."
The earth, his lotus feet adored and said,
"The god who holds the trident, O my lord,
Is ever bent on mischief. To my grief,
I find, the heart of Tripur's foe is full
Of pride and darkness fatal to the world.
His throat emits a venom, (prized by snakes),
Which may consume creation. Sea of grace,
Sole thou canst shield the earth, and no one can!
So, Lakshmi's lord, preserve my life, I pray."
The lord benignant smiled and gently said,
"Return, O Earth, to thy domain. I vow
To check the might of gods and help thy cause:
But Indra, I assure thee, cannot shield
Sumitra's son from Rakshas' hands to day,
For Shiva bears out Ravan in his grief."
Delighted to her home the Earth returned.
The lord invoked the Eagle, bird divine,
And said, "O bird endowed with fleeting wings,
Soar high up in the sky today and rob
Celestials of their valour, as the sun,
The foe of gloom, sucks moisture from the sea."
The bird his wings colossal spread and flew.
His body swept the sky: his shadow broad

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Descended to the earth and thus obscured
Unnumbered woods and mountains, lakes and streams.
As when a house is set on fire, the flames
Effulgent from the windows freely gush,
So, Rakshas shouting from the four-fold gates
Of Lanka rushed. In all directions, yelled
The force of Ram. With crushing speed arrived
The army of the gods and graced the field.
The prince of elephants, heavenly Airavat,
Alighted, wild with zeal and martial fire :
The god of heaven, with thunder armed, who wields
A thousand eyes, was seated on his back :—
Like Peak of Meru, lighted by the sun,
Or like the solar god himself at noon.
Next on the car with peacok for its flag
Arrived the foe of Tarak, Skanda, chief,
With Chitra-rath who drove a checkered car.
Full many a Kinnar, Yaksha, Gandarva,
On chariots riding, lastly graced the scene.
The jewel of mankind, the hero Ram
Fell prostrate on the ground and thus addressed
God Indra, "In my previous birth, O lord,
Thy vassal I, it seems, secured a deal
Of religious merits ; hence I see thee here
In peril which besets me fast to day ;
And hence the feet of gods who dwell in heaven :—
The feet which I, their servant, ever court :—
Have hallowed with their steps the mortal world
I hail thee, thunder-holder, king of gods ! "
Responded Indra thus : "The car divine

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Ascend, O crown of Raghu's royal line
And hero favoured of the gods, and kill
The miscreant Ravan with thy valiant arms.
The wretch is doomed. In days of yore, as gods
The ocean churned and thus secured by might
Ambrosial drink, they mean to churn again
Today the sea of Ravan's army vast,
And win back Ram's fair consort from his grasp
And nectar Sita thus to thee restore.
How long can Lakshmi loiter in the deep
Enshrouding all the world in darkness dense?"
The gods, the men, the Rakshas fiercely warred,
And dinned: and conches roared like ocean deep:
The archers bent their bow: with lightning speed
The arrows flew and hissed and scaled anon
The sky and hit the shield and armour bright
And, wounding foe-men, steeped the soil in gore.
In legions Rakshas fell: men licked the dust.
Colossal elephants and spirited steeds
Dropped life-less on the ground, like leaves of trees
By tempest blown. The war-cry rent the sky!
With four divisions of the army vast,
The terror of the gods, brave Chamar rushed.
Effulgent like the sun, Gandarva's king,
The valiant Chitra-rath, held back his troops;
A lion meets his foe, the elephant thus.
Udagra, charioteer, to war invoked
Sugriva with a shout. The rattling cars
Revolved like ceaseless currents of a stream.
Resistless Vaskal with a mighty dash

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Impelled the force of elephants to the war
To meet brave Angad, as he met his eyes.
Prince Angad met him, as a lion's cub
Observes a herd of fawns. With scimitar armed,
In charge of coursers, Asiloma brave
In wrath encountered Sharav in the field.
Like Shiva deadly, Viralaksha grim
Fought, tooth and nail, with hero Hanuman.
A car celestial mounting, Rama rushed
Like second Indra armed with thunder dire.
From peacock car, astonished Tarak's foe
His counterpart beheld in Lakshman's face.
Impelled by foot, a heap of dust arose
In shape of clouds. The ocean sounded deep :
And Lanka shook. The lord of sky himself
Arranged with skill unmatched the troops for war.
The king of Rakṣhas, on the other hand,
His Pushpak scaled and rushed to thick of fight.
The clattering wheels emitted sparks of fire :
And spirited chargers neighed with savage joy.
The flashing gleam of diamonds led the van,
As dawn precedes the sun, on Peak of Rise.
The Rakshas loudly cheered : their sovereign great
Accosted thus the driver of his car,
"O charioteer, behold, we have to deal
With double hosts : for gods and men combine,
As flames of fire unite with heaps of smoke !
The hero smiled and added with a sneer,
"How bold is Indra, look, without my son
Whose sad demise explains his presence here."
This thought provoked him, and he loud exclaimed,

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"Propel the car, O charioteer, at once
To Indra's place, the god who thunder wields."
As quick as mind, the golden chariot rolled,
Before whose dash, the force of Ram fell back
Like denizens of the forest who retreat,
As they behold an elephant, dripping ruts ;
Or as wild beasts are scared, when they observe
A cloud gigantic charged with fire of heaven
And pealing thunder. On he moved with zeal,
And bent his bow and in a moment pierced
The serried phalanx of the hostile force.
Look ! How with ease the rushing deluge sweeps
A bridge of sand ; or how a tiger fierce
Destroys a fence of cow-herds in the night ;
So Ravan made a breach in Rama's camp.
The foe of Tarak drove his peacock-car,
Advanced, and bent his godly bow with pluck,
And thus resisted dashing Pushpak's speed.
With folded hands, the Raksha bowed and said :—
"O god, thy vassal, I, devoutly bend
Before the feet of Shankar and his spouse
With fervour, day and night, which knows no bounds.
Then why among the foe, I see thee here ?
And why befriendest thou the wretched Ram ?
By means unfair hath Lakshman slain my son
Whose death I will avenge : pray, thwart me not,"
Responded Kartik, Gouri's offspring thus,
"O lord of Rakshas, Lakshman I will shield,
As ordered by the king of gods to-day.
Therefore, unless frustrated by thine arms,
I cannot let thy chariot move an inch."

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Inspired with Rudra's valour, Rakshas' lord
Discharged his fiery weapon with a shout
Indignant, and with arrows hit him hard.
Fair Gouri who in peril saves the world
Accosted Vijaya thus : "Behold, my mate,
The cruel Rakshas' lord assails my son !
The eagle, bird divine, in sky (observe !)
Is robbing there the gods of all their strength.
Pray, hie thee, damsel, with electric speed
To earth below and check my darling child.
My heart, companion, bursts to find his frame,
Like velvet soft, besmeared with blood profuse.
My lord, appeased with ease, his votary loves
More dearly than his son. Hence, Rakshas' king,
Resistless, holds his own against his foe."
The herald masked as solar ray arose
And through the azure welkin briskly passed.
Arriving at her goal, she whispered thus
In Kartik's ears : "Restrain thy weapons keen ;
O god, thy mother lovely thus commands.
For Ravan, by thy gracious sire, today
Hath been invested with god Rudra's power,
Which shields him like a charm in the fight."
The foe of Tarak with a gentle smile
Withdrew his chariot ; and, with a yell
Of triumph, Rakshas' monarch onward moved.
Like countless girdles, Gandarvas and men
Encircled Rakshas' king who wildly roared
And vanquished them in fight, as fatal fire
Consumes the trees in forest, clustered thick.
God Indra to the rescue ran incensed,
As Karna rushed at Arjun in the field
Of Kuru-kshetra famed in days of yore.

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The Raksha aimed at Airavat his lance,
Most frightful, which with arrows keen
God Indra shattered. Flushed with deep conceit,
The king of Rakshas spake to Indra thus,
"Sad victim of a plot devised by thee,
My son who ever caused thy heart to quail
Is now no more. Hence, miscreant vile,
Thou hast the face to come down here in force,
And throw my gloves to me ! O Indra, fie on thee !
Thou art a god immortal, or like Yam
I would have squeezed from thee thy wretched life.
Thou shalt not shield Sumitras's son today ;
For I am bent to crush that reptile vile."
With this remark he held his fatal dart
And from his chariot jumped upon the ground.
The earth, thus trampled, quivered deep convulsed ;
The sword in scabbard rattled on his thigh !
Enraged god Indra grasped his thunder bright,
But could not lift it, as his might was robbed
By eagle godly watching from the sky.
The Raksha king his mace colossal aimed
At Airavat, as in a tempest wild
The wind uproots a big and mighty tree,
And hurls it at the mountain-peak with force.
The elephant, wounded, bent his knee and sank.
Rejoiced, the Raksha scaled the Pushpak car
And cast a look of contempt at his foe.
Abashed and chagrined Indra, on his part,
Rode on a car which Matali secured,
And with his army beat a quick retreat.

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With bow in hand and with a savage yell
And mounted on a chariot, anon
Ram graced the battle-field and faced the foe.
Thus said the king of Rakshas, "Sita's lord,
I do not want to fight with thee, today :
I grant thee lease of life for one day more.
Hence run and shelter in thy tent : and say
Where hides thy younger brother, traitor vile,
Who can by no means fly my vengeful hand."
The archer Ravan shouted, as he saw
The hero Lakshman who on foot or car,
Afar, was mowing down his foe like grain.
The Pushpak car whose flag like comet glowed
With loud and rattling, rumbling noise advanced,
Emitting sparks of flame on all sides round.
As with extended wings the falcon flies
To seize a dove that meets his vigilant eye
In distant sky, the furious Raksha rushed.
The gods and men from all directions poured
To shield Sumitra's son, and Rakshas dashed
With glee intense to see their valiant lord.
Boisterous in his speed, like wind-god brave,
Anjana's son defeated by his might
The Raksha hero, Viralaksha grim,
And hastened to the thick of fight and frowned.
His foes fell back before his death-like form,
As cotton moved by winds disordered flies.
With arrows keen the lord of Rakshas brave
Bored Hanu's heart. Perplexed with pain acute,
The hero lost his balance like the globe
Convulsed by earth-quake, and invoked the aid
Of wind, his sire, in this emergent hour.
The wind bestowed his valour on his son,

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As with his light, the sun-god vests the moon,
Conducing thus to lily's sole delight.
Nikasha's son, sustained by Rudra's might,
Prevailed at last, and Hanu ran away.
Kiskindha's gallant lord who put to death
Resistless Udagra now took the lead.
Thus cried the lord of Lanka with a sneer,
"O savage, pomp and glory of thy reign,
Thou didst abandon in an evil hour,
And come to Lanka, land of gold, in vain.
For this alliance close with hero Ram,
Thy dearest Tara, fair like morning star,
Who was thy brother's wife, was left behind
In Kishkindha. Back to thy native land !
Avaunt ! and shield thyself. For why, O fool,
The damsel shalt thou widow once again ?
Say, hath she got a husband's brother more ?"
Responded hoarsely Sugriv, most incensed,
"A villain more accomplished than thyself,
O Raksha king, I cannot trace on earth.
Thou ravishest neighbours' wives, thou lustful beast,
And committest sins whose measure now is full,
For which prepare to answer by thy neck.
Thy days are numbered. Nemesis shall descend
Anon to serve thee right. Come on, thou knave !"
With this, he roared and hurled a peak sublime
Which rushed with force and thus obscured the sky.
The archer Ravan, with his arrows keen,
The weighty summit crumbled unto dust :
And snapped the string of his colossal bow.
Sugriva, smarting under tortures keen,

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Was deep perplexed, and beat a quick retreat :
And Rama's force, with panic struck, dispersed
Like mound collapsing, pressed by deluge hard.
The gods deprived of grace by eagle's might,
And men, bewildered, vanished from the scene :
As flames of fire combined with heaps of smoke
Are blown away in tempest by the winds.
The Raksha saw at length Sumitra's son
(Endowed with grace divine) and thundered loud.
Responding, fearless Lakshman raised a shout
And, incensed, bent his bow, the gift of god.
With passion flushed, the Rakshas' lord spake thus :
"O Lakshman, meanest of thy kind, at last
In field of battle have I found thee out ?
Where is the lord of sky, with thunder armed ?
And where are gone fair Kartik with his car,
Thy brother Ram, the best of Raghu's line,
And king Sugriva ? Whom wilt thou approach
For aid today ? Behold, thy end is near.
Remember in this critical hour, O wretch,
Sumitra, mother thine, and Urmila,
Thy spouse. To beasts of prey, in woods
I will consign thy flesh. The earth shall suck
The currents of thy gore, O bloody fool !
In times unhappy, thou didst cross the sea.
Thou hast betrayed thy cloven foot, O thief,
By thy intrusions on the fane of fire
And purloin of my son, my valued gem :
And amply shalt thou pay for all thy sins."
The monarch bent his mighty bow and roared.
Responded Lakshman like a lion thus :—

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"By birth I am a Kshatri, Rakshas' lord ;
So, death I do not fear, far less thyself.
Thy son's demise, it seems, hath turned thy head.
But do thy worst. I will relieve thy woe ;
For thou shalt go to where thy son hath gone !"
A violent combat raged : and men and gods,
Astonished, gazed at one another's face.
Sumitra's son destroyed a hundred times
The lattice thick of arrows pointed, - framed
By Rakshas' lord who thus astounded said :—
"Thy courage I admire, Sumitra's son,
Endowed with lion's strength. Thou wieldest power
Which far excels, O archer, Kartik's might :
But naught can shield thee from my hands today."
With this remark, the monarch, first of all,
Called to his mind the figure of his son,
And darted next with force the iron-spear
Which thundered loud and, like the lightning bright
Instinct with might designed to slay the foe,
Illumined all the sides. The peal, the flash,
A thrill produced in veins of men and gods.
Hit hard by iron spear brave Lakshman fell,
And rolled on earth : as drops a star from heaven.
The weapon, godly, rattled, but besmeared
With blood, its former gleam and lustre lost.
The virtuous Lakshman fell : so drops a hill
Which teems with dragons dread and deadly snakes.
As in a forest dense the fowler runs
To catch the prostrate fawn his arrow hit,
The Raksha lord descended from his car,
And swift advanced to seize the hero's corpse.
A mighty wail was heard on every side :

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Lamenting deep, heroic gods and men
Surrounded Lakshman dead, Sumitra's son.
In Kailash, Shiva's spouse adored her lord
And thus addressed him, "List! O god supreme!
The Raksha lord hath slain today in fight
Sumitra's son whose body rolls on ground.
O friend of thy adherents, thou hast pleased
The Raksha's heart and humbled Indra's pride.
I pray, O lord, preserve poor Lakshman's frame."
The trident-holder, smiling, thus addressed
The valiant Vira-Bhadra, "Hero, check
Victorious Ravan in his foul design."
With speed of mind, the willing herald ran
And whispered thus in Ravan's ear anon :—
"Return to Lanka, land of gold, O king.
Thy foe is dead : thou need no longer fight."
With this remark, he melted like a dream.
King Ravan took the cue and scaled his car :
The Raksha trumpet flourished : Rakshas roared !
The Raksha army to the town returned,
As Durga, goddess, having slain her foe,
The demon Rakta-vij, in days of yore,
With lips and frame suffused with copious blood,
With joy hysteric and sardonic laugh,
And dances queer, eccentric, wild and fierce,
Returned triumphant from the field of war.
As gods combined adored her feet with joy,
So bards with odes extolled the Raksha force
Come back from war with victory's laurels crowned,
And graced by Bellona, the deity dread !
Defeated Indra, on the other hand.
Deep mortified, with gods returned to heaven.

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BOOK VIII.

THE INFERNO.

As after having done his sessions work,
The king attains his sanctum-sanctorum,
Removes, anon, the diadem from his brow,
And keeps it in its place with great esteem,
The sun arriving at the Peak of Set
Put off the crown of gem which gloom dispels.
The night approached with her attendant stars;
The tranquil lord, the moon, the sweet abode
Of nectar heavenly, smiling followed suit.
The field of war was lit by flames of fire,
Unnumbered. Prostrate, life-less lay on ground
Sumitra's son: and speechless by his side
Was seated Rama. Copious tears he shed,
United with his brother's gore profuse,
Besmeared the earth: as flow from mountains high
A cascade gurgling mixed with ochre red.
Condoling at his grief dejected lay
His army vast including Bibhishan,
Sumali, Hanu, Neel and Kumud dire,
Sharav, Sugriv and Angad, warriors brave,
And Keshari with arms colossal graced.
The lord revived and thus began aggrieved :—
"O Lakshman, when I sacrificed my crown
And dwelt amidst the dire, Dandak woods,
With bow in hand for ever wast thou wont

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To guard the threshold of my hut at night.
Today I am with peril vast beset
In Rakshas' land and flouted by the foe :—
And yet forgetful of the dangers here,
On earth, O hero, thou dost seek repose!
Arise, I say! For when didst thou refuse
My orders to obey? By evil luck,
(Which ever like a shadow dogs my heels),
If thy offending brother thou wouldst shun,
I know not, hero dearer than my life,
How Sita is to blame in this affair.
She bears in mind her husband's brother kind,
And hugs his image fondly in her heart.
Pray, how couldst thou forget, O brother dear,
The nymph whom mother-like thou wouldst adore?

Pulasta's grandson led by wicked lust
Detains a wedded damsel of thy house :—
Is it becoming on thy part, I ask,
That, though destructive like the flame of fire
Effulgent, thou should lie on ground in peace
And not chastise the rogue? Arise, o flag
Of success in our line, but for whose help
I figure like a car whose wheels are gone.
Behold, here, Hanu helpless lies, devoid
Of valour like a bow that lost its string :
There, look how Angad deeply mourns thy loss :
And there, how Sugriv is immersed in woe.
And further how Bibhishan looks perplexed!
Stirred by the mournful aspect of my troops,
Pray, rise and ope thine eyes, and cheer our heart.

But if with this Titanic, heartless war,

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Thou art exhausted, archer, let us pack,
Attended by our retinue, to the forest dense.
We need not rescue Sita, void of luck :
Nor shed the blood of truculent Rakshas here.
For how at Saryu's coast without thee, pray,
To Sumitra, my mother, shall I show
My wretched face? What answer shall I make,
When with a heart afflicted she will ask,
"O virtuous Ram, where is thy brother gone,
The pupil of mine eye?" How shall I soothe
His spouse Urmila and my countrymen?
Arise, my child. For through fraternal love
By sacrifice of state and royal pomp,
Thou didst attend me exiled to the woods.
My distress ever melted thee to tears :
But, brother dearer than my life, mine eyes
Are dim with flowing streams today: but, strange,
They move thee not, nor rouse thee from thy sleep.
Thy love fraternal, all the world admires :—
How, then, O fountain-head of all my joy,
This conduct suits thee at this critical hour?
With virtue as my witness, all my life,
The gods I worshipped. They have served me right,
At last! O ever gracious night! with dews
That dost refresh the blossoms dried by sun,
Revive this Lakshman flower, I do beseech;
And with ambrosial drops, O god of moon,
Restore to life the dead and thus oblige
Thy vassal here, a suppliant at thy feet."
With Lakshman in his arms, the Rakshas' foe
Lamented thus his loss in field of war.

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The heroes, all afflicted, heaved a sigh,
As trees gigantic moan in forests dense
Disturbed by boisterous winds at dead of night.
The wail of Ram afflicted Mountain's child,
Whose tears suffused her husband's knees and feet
Like dews adorning lotus leaves at dawn.
The lord enquired why was his spouse aggrieved.
Responded Gouri thus :—"Omni-scient lord,
What can be hidden from thy knowledge vast?
For, there, attend with care. Poor Lakshman's loss
His brother mourns at Lanka, land of gold.
And, look! my heart is bursting at his woe!
Now, lord of all, I question, in the world
Who will thy spouse submissive care to greet?
For hast thou not to-day put her to shame,
And branded Gouri's name with foul disgrace?
O best of ascetics, with thy holy rites
I interfered : and hence, perhaps, I reap
The fruit. My threshold, in an evil hour,
Was crossed by Indra : at an ominous time
The lord of Sita, too, adored my feet."
Offended deep and weeping, Gouri paused.
Responded Shiva smiling ; "Mountain's child,
A trifling matter need not grieve thy heart.
To land of shades, depute the gallant Ram.
With Maya, by my grace, the warrior brave
Shall enter that infernal world alive.
His father Dashrath shall direct the means
How Lakshman will revive : so cheer up, sweet.
This trident, consort fair, to Maya hand,
Whose beam effulgent shall dispel the gloom

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Of Inferno, like columns bright of fire.
As subjects greet the sceptre of their king,
The ghosts shall bow before this potent dart."
At Kailash, Durga in her mind invoked
Illusive Maya. In a trice, the nymph
Appeared and knelt before her gracious feet.
Thus Durga bade her in a gentle tone :—
"Enchantress of the world, to Lanka hie.
Perplexed with grief at Lakshman's death, alas!
The lord of Sita weeps. Pray, cheer him up,
And conduct him anon to Inferno :
For there his father Dashrath shall announce
How Lakshman and his comrades will revive.
With lily hands, pray, hold my husband's dart
Whose beams effulgent shall dispel the gloom
Of Tartarus like columns bright of fire!"
The deity Maya bowed and took her leave.
And as she winged her flight through azure sky,
The shadows vanished from the milky way,
Out-shone by her resplendent gleam. Like gems
Which flash in sunlight, smiled the stars.
A line of light in welkin did she leave
Behind, and soar for Lanka, land of gold :
So sails a merry steamer on the sea,
And braves the billows with her pinions raised!
At length the goddess reached the goal desired,
And lighted quickly at the camp of Ram
(Who mourned the loss of Lakshman with his host),
And filled the air with heavenly fragrance sweet!
The mother whispered thus in Rama's ears,
"Take heart of grace, I bid, O Dashrath's son!

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Thy brother dear, I promise, shall revive.
Arise, and bathe in sea. Then pace my heels :
For I will guide thee to the land of shades.
Alive thou shalt proceed, by Shiva's grace,
Tonight, to Inferno, O virtuous prince.
Thy father Dashrath shall direct the means
Of bringing back to life thy brother dead.
A tunnel leading straight to hell, my spell
Shall excavate, through which, as led by me,
Thou shalt, undaunted, onward step thy way.
Meanwhile Sugriva and his myrmidons,
The corpse of Lakshman, shall preserve with care."
Astonished Rama cautioned all his chiefs,
And then proceeded to the ocean beach,
Renowned as bath, most sacred in the world.
The lucky prince in holy water dipped,
And with oblations pleased the gods and manes.
He then attained the threshold of his tent,
Alone, (now rendered bright by rays divine.)
With folded hands he offered flowers fresh
To Maya and adored her blessed feet.
With dash and courage, in a martial garb,
The hero to the tunnel rushed. Indeed !
How fear can quell a heart sustained by gods ?
The hero passed as, in the dead of night,
A traveller passeth, fearless through the woods
Illumined by the rays of smiling moon :
The goddess Maya, speechless, led the van.
At length the best of Raghu's race perceived
A murmur threatening, deafening, loud and deep.
It seemed as if all oceans of the world
In one another's being freely mixed,

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And raising high their voices at a time,
Indignant roared ! Affrighted he beheld
The hideous hell, (obscured by lasting gloom,)
At hand. The Styx which, like a moat
Around it flowed, like thunder pealed aloud.
Like milk in heated utensils, the waves,
By flames of fire perturbed, rose, off and on,
With rapid force and gave out puffs of smoke.
The sky in hell is void of sun or moon :
But thick and sombre clouds with thunder charged
At random wander in the void and roar
And belch out flames of fire, as in Pralay
God Shiva, fixing arrows to his bow,
Tremendous yells to end the fated world.
Astonished Ram across the river met
A bridge unparallelled changing colours oft.
At times it glared like fire ; at other times,
It was obscured by smoke : anon it flashed
Like gold : and ever countless sinners vile
Ran gasping in direction of the bridge.
The lord of Sita asked ; "O goddess, pray,
Why doth the bridge a thousand forms take,
And why are countless creatures running there
Like insects jumping into flames of fire?"
Responded thus the goddess :—"Sita's lord,
The structure changeth colour at its will :
To sinners' eye the bridge is fire and smoke ;
But to the virtuous it transforms itself,
And takes the aspect of a heavenly road.
Behold, O best of men, un-numbered souls
That parted from the earth are flocking here,
To reap the fruits of their respective acts.

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The virtuous, as they cross the bridge, attain
The Northern, Western and the Eastern gates.
The sinners have to swim across the stream
Without a pause, and struggling reach the shore.
While wading thus through water deep, their souls
Are branded, as it were, with heated oil :
And when they reach the coast of hell at last,
The myrmidons of Yam torment them sore.
Just come with me, and thou shalt there perceive
Scenes ghastly witnessed not by human sight."
With gentle footsteps Rama dogged her heels;
And goddess of illusion, like the lamp
Of gold which lights up dismal gloom, advanced.
Close by the bridge, the frightened Ram beheld
A myrmidon of Yam, with mace in hand
And grisly in appearance, who exclaimed
Like thunder thus :—"O mortal, who art thou ?
And how hast thou in flesh presumed to come
To Tartarus where spirits dwell alone ?
Respond at once ; or with a stroke of dart,
I end thy life." The goddess Maya smiled,
And showed to him the trident of the Lord.
The myrmidon inclined his head and said :—
"O damsel chaste, it is beyond my power
To thwart thy movements. Just behold the bridge,
Assuming golden hue and looking bright
Like sky illumined by the merry dawn."
Thus both of them the stygian river crossed,
When solid iron-gates of hell appeared
Before his eyes. Circular flames of fire
In heaps were rolling on and on and on,

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And lit the gloom of that infernal place.
Inscribed upon the dreadful gate with fire,
The best of men perused the following bill,
"This passage leads all sinners, travellers sad,
To place of endless torture. Sacrifice
Thy cherished hopes, O pilgrim to this land."
The hero at the threshold saw with dread
The illness Fever, like a skeleton grim.
At times with cold he shuddered : and at times
His body, as it were, was scorched by fire.
Look! How the marine fire consumes the sea;
So biles and blood and phlegm assailed the wretch
By turns and thus deprived him of his wits.
Beside him, grimly sat with ravenous maw
Appetite, glum and gluttonous, vomiting food
Which could not be digested, and anon,
The same devouring like some dainty meal.
And next to him sat Drunkenness with smiles
And half-shut eyes. At times he danced and sang;
At other times, he wept or picked a quarrel,
A silly, stupid wretch devoid of sense!
And next to him was seated filthy Lust :
His frame was rotten to the core : and yet
The fool desisted not from sensual joys,
For thoughts licentious ever pricked his heart.
Consumption, by his side, was spitting blood
And coughing with persistence, day and night :
And Asthma, gasping with suspended breath
And throbbing heart, beside him, held his rank.
Next Cholera looked aghast with stony eyes :—
The blood, to water limpid turned, gushed out

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In torrents from his lips and anus fast :—
His foe, the thirst, assailed him, off and on :
The dreadful spy of death called Tetanus
His delicate body cramped with might and main,
As out of fun the tiger in the woods,
From time to time, assails his slaughtered prey.
At hand was Madness seated by his side : --
At times, most valiant like the flame of fire
Sustained by ghee : at other times, most mild.
At times he put on jewels ; and at times
He put off clothes like Kali, fond of war :
With clap of hands, at times he sang aloud
Or wept or laughed a wild convulsive laugh :
At times he cut his throat or poison took,
Or sank in pools or hanged himself with cords.
At other times, Oh fie ! by lust impelled,
Some woman he invoked in wanton mood.
Unmindful of the filth or urine foul,
He mingled it with food and ate it up.
At times with fetters chained he struggled hard ;
At other times the wretch was quite serene
And gentle like a river undisturbed
By winds. The hero thus observed a host
Of maladies in hell, that haunt the world.
The hero saw dread War with scimitar armed
And clad in red and on a car of fire.
His charioteer was Anger fierce who wore
A wreath of human heads around his neck,
And trampled with his feet on heaps of dead.
Next, Murder he observed with sword in hand,
For ever raised to strike the deadly blow.
With eyes wide open and a rolling tongue
With cord around his neck, grim Suicide, next,

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He saw with fear, suspended from a tree.
The goddess Maya, Rama thus addressed :—
" The myrmidons of death thou just hast seen,
O Raghav brave, in various shapes resolve
Around the world without a moment's pause,
As in a forest dense, the fowler roves
In quest of prey. Now enter, Sita's lord,
Tartarus city, Pluto's chief domain.
I do intend to show thee, Raghav, there
How spirits live in pits assigned to them.
This is the Southern gate of hell observe;
Fierce hell-pits, four and eighty, here subsist!"
The hero rushed to Pluto's land, anon,
To which his presence lent a moment's grace,
As spring adorns the woods consumed by fire,
Or as sweet nectar stirs a life-less frame.

The land was full of darkness ; all around
A wail was heard ; the water and the land,
By earth-quake, every now and then, were moved.
The clouds indignant vomited fatal fire ;
The winds exhaled a fetid smell, which showed
Unnumbered dead were burning at a time.
Anon the best of Raghu's line beheld
A lake colossal by his side. The fire,
To liquid turned, was flowing like a stream
With murmurs. Countless beings therein sunk
Lamented deep and loud in tortures thus :—
" Providence hard, what dost thou mean, I pray,
By thus inflicting torments on our souls?
Didst thou create the mortals poor on earth
With this design in view? In mother's womb
Why perished not our fetus, then and there?

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Where are the sun, the moon (sweet nectar's home),
The lord of night, to cheer our heart aggrieved ?
Where are our spouses, sons and kinsmen gone ?
Where is the wealth which led us all astray
From path of virtue and to vice allured ?"
Responded thus in void a form-less voice,
Discordant to the ears :—" In vain, O fools,
Ye censure Providence : ye reap the fruits,
In this infernal world, of all your sins.
By evil tempted, why did ye forsake
The path of virtue ? Why did ye transgress
The moral law established by the gods ?"
The voice celestial paused ; amain with mace,
The myrmidons of hell assailed their heads.
Sharp insects bit them ; carnivorous birds,
With nails of thunder keen and pointed bills,
Extracted entrails from their subtle frames :
The land resounded with their screams of pain.
The goddess grieved accosted Rama thus :—
'This pit, so full of fire, is Raurav called :
To which, O Raghav, are consigned, a thief, a judge
Unjust, and those who commit heinous sins.
The flame is quenchless in this hideous pool.
Here insects ceaseless bite. The fire which scalds
Poor sinners' souls is not a usual one :
The ire of gods, in fact, assumes the form
Of fire and burneth thus. Let us now advance,
And see the pit called Kumbhi-pak wherein
With oil which boils in utensils is fried
The sinner by the sentinels of hell.

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There, hearken, please, to piteous wails of grief.
The fetid smell, no human nose can bear.
Thy nostrils I have shut up with my spell ;
Or, in a minute, hero, thou shalt fly :
Or let us to the Blind Pit just proceed,
Wherein vile wretches who suicide themselves
For ever are confined and howl with pain."
With folded hands responded lord of men :—
"Benignant nymph, excuse thy humble slave ;
For if I witness more their torments here,
Afflicted at their sufferings I shall die.
Who would, indeed, be born as man on earth,
If this condition he attain at last ?
For man is frail and cannot but succumb
To sin's allurements." Answered Maya thus :—
"O archer skilful, every venom dire
Hath got its antidote, the healing balm.
But past is all redemption, sure, the wretch
Who slights the cure or the medicine apt.
Good Raghav, in the sphere assigned to man,
Whoever fights witn sin with all his might,
Is favoured of the gods. Nay, with his shield
The god of virtue guards his feeble frame.
If pits of these chastisements thou wouldst shun,
I will just lead thee to the other side."
Her course she shifted : Raghav followed suit,
And reached a forest lonely, boundless, vast,
Beyond one's easy reach and never cheered
By notes of birds or bloom of fragrant flowers.
To places, few and far between, could rays
(Devoid of lustre, like a patient's smiles)
Through leaves of trees, by struggle, make their way.

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Astounded, countless beings ran in haste,
And stood round Ram, as bees surround
A cup of honey. Him they questioned thus :—
"Pray, who art thou, a being with a frame?
Art thou a god or man? Pray, speak it out.
O virtuous being, rain thy honeyed words,
And thus regale the desert of our heart.
For since our wretched life was thieved by death,
We have not heard the music of the tongue.
Thy handsome mien, O hero, cheered our sight :
Now soothe our hearing with thy pleasant voice."
Responded thus the foe of Rakshas' race :—
"Ghosts, I, your slave, belong to Raghu's line.
King Dashrath was my sire ; and Kaushalya,
Queen dowager, gave birth to me, O saints.
My name is Ram : impelled by ruthless fates,
Alas ! I dwell at present in the woods.
Directed by the god with trident armed,
I started for this land, to see my sire !"
A spectre answered ; "Thee I know full well !
O hero : for thine arrow hit me hard
And killed me in the grove called Pancha-vati.'
The lord of men discovered with a start
The Raksha Marich, now without a frame.
Thus Raghav queried :—"Raksha, let me know
The sin which brought thee to this forest dense?"
Responded thus to Ram the frameless fiend :—
I suffer thus, O Ram, for Ravan's sake,
To serve whose cause I played a trick with thee."
Acute like swords they wielded in the war
Before their death, rushed Dushan, Khar,
(The Rakshas vile) : but when they both behel

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The hero Ram, offended and incensed
They left the place at once ; as when a snake,
Devoid of fangs, beholds a mongoose,-grieved,
It beats a quick retreat and hides itself.
The wild, anon, resounded with a din ;
The spectres flew in fright like jejune leaves
By violent tempests moved and blown away.
To hero Ram, the goddess thus explained :—
"The spectres, list, O crown of Raghu's line,
Different pits frequent but range at times
With sorrow in this lone and doleful wild.
Look, there ! The myrmidons of Yam, enraged,
Pursue and drive them to their destined pits."
The hero Rama, foremost in his rank,
Beheld a host of spectres fast pursued
By Pluto's agents : screaming ran the ghosts
Like panting herds of fawns by lion chased.
Compassion's ocean, Ram, with streaming eyes
Kept pace with Maya, much aggrieved at heart.
Anon, the hero staggered at a wail
Of sorrow loud which sudden reached his ears.
Un-numbered women he beheld, afar,
Deprived of grace like digits of the moon
At dawn. One tore one's waving hair and said :
"Ignoring virtue and all righteous acts,
Flushed with my graceful youth, in vice absorbed,
This hair I used to comb and bind with care,
To tempt my lover's heart, alas !" With nails
One scratched one's bosom high and loud exclaimed :—
"This breast with string of pearls I used to deck ;

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And I am rightly served !" Some woman, pricked,
Knocked out her eyes, as heartless vultures vile
From sockets draw the eyes of animals dead.
"This eye," she said, "I used to paint with black
And dart sweet, loving glances all around ;
And as its image I beheld in glass,
In scorn I held the pretty eye of fawn.
And is my superb charm rewarded thus ?"
The damsels, weeping sadly, passed away,
Chased by the lady-sentinel of death.
Her lock was crowned with hissing dragons huge :
Her nails resembled swords ; her lips, besmeared
With blood, were red. Her rising breast, deformed,
Was dangling, reaching to her navel deep;
And flames of fire, while flashing through her nose,
Com-mingled with the fire her eyes shot forth.
The goddess Maya, Raghav thus addressed :—
"O first in Raghu's line, the women yon
Their persons richly used to deck on earth
Before their death. Impelled by filthy lust,
They put on gorgeous dress to tempt the hearts
Of men licentious in a wanton mood,
As in the month of March the wood-land gay
A verdant garb assumes to charm the spring.
Where is the grace, the wealth of youth, alas !
Now gone ?" The echo mimicking answered thus :—
"Where is the grace, the wealth of youth, alas !"

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With wails the women to their places rushed.
The goddess continued ; "Pray, look again
Before thee, foe of Rakshas." Rama saw
A group of pretty damsels standing there.
Their lock was fairly graced with fragrant flowers ;
The flame of lust was darting from their eyes ;
And honey sweeter than the nectar fine,
By bees from flowers sucked, their lips suffused.
Their necks were decked with ornaments and looked
Like conches held by Indra's hands divine.
The bodice glaring with embroidered silk
And stitched with skill supreme with threads of gold,
Pretending to conceal the rising breast,
Enhanced its charms in order to incite
Voluptuous lust which bites like insects keen
The heart of persons, victims to their wiles.
Their ponderous thigh that thieved the plantain's grace
Peeped through the silken cloth that served as screen
And thus exposed its charms to public view :—
As in a wanton mood the faeries fair,
While sporting naked in the Manas lake,
Through water limpid that conceals their frame,
Betray the form ex-quisite of their limbs.
The anklets rang and girdles round their waists ;
In a sweet chorus (to the merry tune
Of drum and cymbal, rebec and the lute)
The ladies struck a sweet and joyous note.
A band of men appeared anon with smiles,

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Who beamed like winsome Kartik fondly reared
By Krittikas, and matched in outward grace
The god of love as fleeting as the mind.
With lust excited deep, the female band,
Coquettish, amorous glances cast at men.
Like bow-strings, brace-lets sounded on their arms ;
The pollen of the wreath of flowers gay,
By breath (inflamed with passion) blown aloft,
Obscured their sense, as dust conceals the sun.
A battle raged ; the men were quite subdued.
In war of love can man the woman beat?
The damsels, victors, rushed upon their prey :
As flying to the woods, a female bird,
Unmindful of the proper time and place,
With lust excited, courts her favoured mate,
And with her eyes suggests her heart's desire.
A wail of grief, anon, the forest filled.
Astonished Ram beheld in close embrace
The men and women roll upon the ground.
They bit and scratched, and beat with kicks and cuffs :
They knocked out eyes and tore with might the hair.
With nails acute they cut the nose and face :
The soil was flooded with a stream of blood :
The males and females struggled, tooth and nail,
As Bhima in Virat in lady's guise
With Kichak fiercely fought. Yam's myrmi-dons,
With iron dumb-bells armed, arriving there,
The parties chased, who beat a quick retreat.
The goddess Maya gently thus addressed

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The virtuous Raghav, joy of Raghu's race :
"These men and women, child, before their death
Were slaves of passion, lechers vile on earth.
To vice's pool their virtues they consigned,
And sowed wild oats in youth, devoid of shame :
And here they reap, as they had sown in life.
As mirage mocks in life the thirsty man,
As tempts the Dead-sea apple with its hue,
So this affair of love, begun so well,
Dissolves at last in smoke : and, what is worse,
Thé parties grind their teeth in sheer despair.
Just pause : a moment more, and I have done.
The sinner even meets (before he dies
And makes his way to this infernal land)
Misfortunes of this type in wilds of life.
Providence thus prescribes his moral law,
"Excess in youth exhaustion brings in age :
The fire of lust a person cannot quench,
Recoiling on his head, consumes his heart.
In fact, the ire of gods, resistless, takes
The form of lust which tortures thus his frame.
O hero (by whose might the world is quelled),
At length the sinners thus are served in hell."
The best of men devoutly bent and said,
"O mother, by thy grace I witnessed here
Most wondrous scenes no tongue can ever sketch.
But tell me where resides that sainted king,
My sire revered, to whom I shall appeal
To bring to life again my brother dead,
And hand him over to his vassal here".
The goddess Maya laughed and said :—"O Ram,

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The land is boundless : little hast thou seen.
If ceaseless thou and I for one decade
In Hades move about from place to place,
The whole of it we shall not witness still.
At Eastern gate, reside the damsels chaste
Devoted to their husbands, heart and soul.
This part of hell is matchless in the world :
For here, amidst the forests, mansions stand :
And ponds, delightful, teem with lilies gay :
Here vernal winds for ever gently blow,
And cuckoos, as they sing melodious songs,
Raise to the highest pitch their two-fold notes.
Here play spontaneous florin, lute and drum,
The water-cups of music, cymbal, flute :
Here flow in currents milk and curd and ghee :
And countless fruits ambrosial grow on trees.
The meal supreme is Shiva's spouse herself,
The source of boundless boons to all the world !
A person here who wants to have a dish
Of meal intended to be chewed or sucked
Or drunk or licked obtains it, then and there !
It vies, in fact, with heaven, O archer brave,
Where tree of plenty fulfils all desire.
We need not thither hie. Pray, now proceed
To Northern gate and witness wondrous scenes.
Possess thy soul with patience for a while :
Thy father, in a minute, thou shalt see."
They likewise passed towards the Northern gate :
And on the way, the lord of Sita saw
Unnumbered mountains, barren, void of trees.
It seemed as if by fire of heavenly wrath
Consumed, the mounts assumed this aspect wild.

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Some mounts sustained upon their tops the snow :
And, roaring, ceaseless gave out flames of fire.
The slabs, quick melting by the fire, dissolved
And, turning into vapour, stained the sky.
The prince beheld a hundred deserts, vast
And boundless. Winds, inflamed, incessant blew
And swept away in currents piles of sand.
The warrior was astounded, as he saw
Lakes, big as seas, disturbed by howling winds
Which, blowing at intervals, billows raised,
As high as mountains. Marshy stagnant pools
In places met his vision :— wherein frogs,
Most dreadful, croaked with harsh and grating notes.
On the surface of the water floated snakes
Colossal like Anant : whose venom burnt,
As in the ocean churned in days of yore.
Pained by the bite of scorpions, v rmins vile,
The sinners fluttered round and piteous wailed.
Fire decked the floor : but, in the sky above,
The cold was biting ; dreary was the place
And failed to give a moment's short repose.
By Maya led, the hero Ram advanced.
As when the pilot gets a glimpse of land,
And to the piles of water farewell bids,
The breeze, that bears the perfume of the grove,
In welcome mood proceeds to greet him fast,
And notes of merry birds and shouts of mob
His ears delight, and fill his heart with joy,—
So scenes enchanting rushed upon his view.
For, close at hand, the best of Raghu's race,
Astonished, heard melodious dulcet notes,

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And saw unnumbered mansions, charming groves
Of rich and golden flowers and gaping pools
Wherein gay lilies bloomed. In gentle tone
The goddess spake, " O hero, mark the gate
Which leads to boundless raptures warriors great
Who sacrificed their lives in open fight.
There is no limit to the joy, indeed,
Assigned to denizens of this part of hell.
O hero vested with colossal arms,
Let us advance and pace this forest track,
And start for that eternal city called
"The city which recalls the dead to life",
Which rings with praises of illustrious folks,
And beams with presence of the warriors famed.
As sweet and fragrant flowers adorn the grove,
As sun and moon and stars illume the earth,
The smiles of gracious deity, day and night,
For ever shed their lustre on the land,
Most blessed portion of the Hades dark !
The hero, much amused, advanced in haste :
The goddess armed with trident led the van.
At length, as in a stage, the hero saw
A plain before him Countless javelins vast
That looked like Sals were lying there in piles.
In other places, steeds in harness neighed,
Or elephants yelled : or warriors, with the shield,
The sword and other arms, displayed their skill :
Or wrestlers fought and trod the reeling earth :
Or standards, as it were, in martial glee
And triumph flew. The bards sat down with grace
On mats of flowers and played on golden harps,

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Announcing feats achieved by heroes old,
With eulogies which thrilled the audience there.
Fired by the odes, the heroes, in their turn,
Most loudly cheered the bards and clapped their hands.
By arms unseen were coral flowers rained
And fragrance thus diffused throughout the land.
The Apsars danced, and sang the Kinnars fair,
As in empyreal heaven: when Maya said to Ram,
"O crown of noble Kshatri race, behold
The mighty heroes (slain in open fight
In golden age) that are assembled here.
Observe Nikumbha with his golden frame
Resplendent like the mount of golden Peak:
The lustre of his frame ascends the sky!
The goddess Durga, springing from the might
Of gods, this demon killed in days of yore.
And there stands Shumbha brave like Gouri's lord!
By turns, observe there (spirited like a steed)
Mahish: Tripura, furious, (Shiva's foe):
And valiant Vritra and the Titans dread.
Next, look at Sunda, Upasunda dire
Enjoying bliss which love fraternal breeds"
The virtuous Raghav asked; "O nymph divine,
Pray, why are missing dauntless Indrajit,
Narantak, mower fierce of human heads,
Atikay and the Rakshas famed in fight?"
The goddess of illusion answered thus:
"No person can this city ever reach,
Until his kin perform his obsequies.
Beyond the skirts of this infernal land,

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There lies a limbo haunted by the ghosts
Of sinners, that shall wander there at large
Until their funeral rites have been performed.
This is the law eternal, fixed by gods.
Look there ! A mighty warrior bends his steps
To thee. Hence unobserved I loiter here.
O best of heroes, gently greet him, pray."
With this, the mother melted from the sight.
Astonished Rama, best of Raghu's race,
Beheld a warrior great. Electric rays
Were flashing gaily on his diadem bright.
The jewels which adorned his figure huge
The vision dazzled. Armed with spear he walked.
So moves the lord of elephants in the woods !
The hero quick advanced, accosted Ram,
And said ; "O crown of Raghu's line, explain
How with thy body thou couldst grace this land.
Unjustly in a campaign, bear in mind,
Sugriva's side thou didst espouse : and I
Was cut off hence in flower of my youth.
But fear not. To this land consigned by gods
We curb our passion : wrath we donot know.
For filthy is the stream of human life
Which drains the earth : but when directed here,
An aspect pure it holds. Pray, look at me :
My name is Vali." Raghav, best of men,
Abashed, perceived Kishkindha's lord deceased,
Who gently smiled, and thus resumed his speech,
"Proceed with me, O hero, to that grove
Replete with golden flowers, wherein dwells
Jatayu brave, thy father's friend, in peace,
Whose heart will fill with raptures at thy sight.

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To shield a damsel chaste from danger grave,
The generous hero sacrificed his life :
His glory, therefore, warrior, knows no bounds !'
The foe of Rakshas queried, "Deign to say,
O warrior, if ye all enjoy the bliss
In equal measure in the land of ghosts."
Thus answered Vali, "List! A mine contains
Unnumbered gems. But are they equally bright ?
Yet, more or less, they all with lustre glow."
Communing sweetly thus, they both advanced.
The best of men perceived Jatayu soon,
(Garuda's son), endowed with face divine
And strolling leisurely, as through a grove
Delightful, flows a stream of nectar sweet.
The throne majestic which he filled was set
With gems and framed with costly ivory.
Flashing like leaves of lotus, rays serene
Illumed the grove, as struggling beams of sun
Pass through an awning to a festive place :
And music of the florin cheered the sense.
The vernal breeze with lasting perfume charged
In merry whispers blew. The hero said,
Accosting Ram, "O crown of human race,
My friend's son, thou hast cheered mine eyes to-day.
Ah! Blessed is thy life. In happy times,
Thy mother bore thee in her precious womb :
Thy sire (my friend) is also blessed thrice !
Most favoured of the gods art thou ; and hence
In body thou couldst reach infernal land.
My child, I want to gather news of war,—
Please tell me just if Ravan hath been slain."
The lord inclined his head and meekly said :—

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"By favour of thy feet, O sire, I killed
Full many a Raksha in this dreadful war:
The monarch of the Rakshas sole survives.
The virtuous Lakshman, hit by Ravan's spear,
Hath lost his life; and hence, by Shiva bid,
I see this world beyond a mortal's reach.
Sire, deign to let me know, thy humble slave,
Where I may meet my father in this land."
Jatayu answered thus; "At Western gate,
The sainted king resides with other saints.
To me is not forbid that blessed land,
To which I mean to usher thee anon:
Hence, follow in my wake: I take the lead."
The virtuous Ram, advancing thus, beheld
Full many a golden mansion on the way,
Angelic forms and many a glorious scene.
The coasts of ponds were decked with charming groves,
Where beings radiant sported round with joy,
Like bees (that gaily hum in jolly spring
In woods 'midst green and fragrant bowers)
Or fire-flies bright that cluster in the night,
And in a glorious row illume the sides.
Apace they went, and countless beings strange
Surrounded Ram. Jatayu thus exclaimed:—
"This hero springs from Raghu's noble stock
And with his frame, by Shiva bid, alive,
He hath arrived to-day at spectres' land,
To greet his father's feet. So, bless him, pray,
O beings bright, and then depart in peace."
The beings blessed him, as desired, and left.
With joy transported, both the pilgrims paced,
And at a certain place they saw a mount

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Of gold, whose summit high, like Shiva's head
Obscured by knotted hair, was hid by trees,
And touched the sky. In murmurs sweet a fount,
Producing, in its limpid liquid, pearls
And gems and precious stones, was gurgling by.
In valleys low, they saw a verdant field
Of flowers fragrant;—watered by a pond
That teemed with lilies. Perched on trees,
The cuckoos raised their notes and ever coo-ed.
Garuda's son accosted Ram and said :—
"Observe the Western gate of gold. This part
Of hell holds towering mansions made of pearls.
Behold! There sit upon a golden throne,
Well shaded by an emerald parasol bright,
Dilipa virtuous and his consort chaste,
Sudakshina. With reverence greet them both,
The founders of thy race. This land is graced
By countless sainted kings named Mandhata,
Nahush, Ikshaku, monarchs famed on earth.
The warrior versed in chariot-fight advanced
And laid him prostrate low before the feet
Of his ancestor Dilip and his spouse.
The noble Dilip blessed him and enquired :—
"Pray, pilgrim, who art thou, endowed with grace
Divine. In flesh and blood I find thee here!
My heart rejoices, as mine eyes behold
Thy lunar face."-His consort thus began :—
"O lucky pilgrim, who art thou, I pray?
As in a foreign land the stranger's heart
With sweet emotion beats to see his friend,
My bosom throbs with joy to see thee here.
Which damsel chaste in an auspicious hour
Sustained thee in her womb, O virtuous child?

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Thou hast a form divine. From godly stock
If thou descendest, why at all our feet
Thou greetest? And if not a god by birth,
O man divine, what lineage dost thou own?"
With folded hands, the son of Dashrath thus,
"Thy son, O sainted king, was Raghu famed
Who conquered by his prowess all the world.
Thy son begat a worthy son named Aja
Whose rule was marked by justice in the world.
The princess Indumati sought his hands,
And chose him for her husband who begat
On her a son named Dashrath, noble king.
His spouse, queen-consort, virtuous Kaushalya,
Gave birth to me, thy humble servant here.
Sumitra, mother, in her womb, sustained
Brave Lakshman and Satrughna (worthy pair)
Who strike a terror in the heart of foe.
And Kekai mother, O my lord, gave birth
To worthy brother Bharat in her turn."
The sainted king responded thus, "Thou art
The glorious summit of Ikshaku's race.
I bless thee, hero Ram, renowned on earth:
And as long as the sun and moon exist,
The world shall loudly trumpet out thy fame.
O best of virtuous men, my royal race
Hath been exalted in the universe
By beaming virtues of thy head and heart.
Thou see'st there the Golden Mount, my child,
Beside which stands a famous Banian tree,
(A tree immortal, as they call it here),
Just on the coast of Styx, infernal stream:—
And at the root of that most sacred tree
Thy father, with a view to get a boon

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On thy behalf, adores with pious zeal
Yama, the god of virtue. Hence, Raghav brave,
Approach the sainted monarch who condoles
With thee in thy distress and prays for thee."
The best of men adored his lotus-feet,
From brave Jatayu parted, and alone,
(Above by goddess Maya led) advanced
To that mountainous tract of gold, and saw
The famous banian, on the Styx's coast,
Whose water at this place like nectar flows.
Redemption's source and courted by the gods,
The tree has golden boughs and golden leaves
And fruits whose grace no pen could ever sketch.
The sainted king, as he behold his son
Afar, (with breast suffused with flowing tears
And arms extended) rushed to him amain,
And said, "By grace of gods, my dearest child,
(More precious than my life), hast thou arrived
At last at land beyond the reach of man
To cheer mine eyes? And is my treasure, lost
To me, restored at length? O virtuous Ram,
How much I suffered for thy sake, the gods
Alone can say! As fire melts a piece
Of iron, so the shock which I sustained
To see thee exiled to the woods dissolved
My mortal frame: aggrieved I shut mine eyes
In endless night and died before my time.
By my misfortune, gods have likewise writ
Disasters on thy forehead, too, I see.
And why the cruel fates oppress thee thus?
Because thou ever wieldest virtue's cause.
Hence Kekai wretched trampled with her heels
The budding plant of hope which sweetly graced

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The garden of my heart: as treads in pride
A female elephant wild on creepers fail."
The hero Dashrath wept with streaming eyes
And looks afflicted. Rama answered thus,
"On peril's boundless ocean do I float,
O sire. Thy grace I, therefore, meekly crave
With hands conjoined in zeal. If people here
Can see what passes in the mortal world,
Thou hast not failed to realise mine aim.
While fighting with the foe, my brother died
A death untimely: and unless, O lord,
He cometh back, restored to life and me,
I stick to hell for ever from this time."
The hero prostrate fell at Dashrath's feet,
And shed a flood of tears. His father thus,
"I know, my child, what brings thee to this land.
By sacrifice of personal comforts here,
The lord of virtue for thy sake I greet.
Take heart of grace: thy Lakshman shall revive
He is not dead: the vital wind of life
Still lingers in his frame, as, in a cell
Of prison broken, breathes a captive chained.
List! At the top of Gandha-madan hills,
There grows a golden plant for medicine famed:
Whose virtues potent heal destructive wounds.
Vishalya it is named: secure it soon
And thus restore thy brother dear to life.
In mood complacent Yam himself to-day
Revealed to me the method of his cure.
To those auspicious hills that bless the world,
Despatch thy servant Hanu, son of Wind,
Who, speedy and valorous like his sire,
Will in a trice the plant of medicine bring.

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I foretell, in the Armageddon dire,
Thy hands shall lay the lord of Rakshas low :
My daughter-in-law, grace of Raghu's line,
Shall soon return and deck my house again.
But all the same, my son, by fates designed
Thou art to lead a life beset with thorns.
As incense burning in the incense-pot
Diffuses aroma sweet around a shrine,
So thou, my son, consumed by torture's flame,
Shall scatter thy renown throughout the globe :
The world shall ring with praises of thy feats.
But thou shalt share misfortunes, too, in life,
And sufferings due to my misdeeds and sins,
For which I reaped the fruits in mortal world :
For, parted from thyself, I lost my life.
On earth it is but midnight yet. Return
With speed to Lanka, helped by grace divine.
Despatch in haste the hero Hanuman
To those gigantic cliffs in quest of herbs
Which shall renew the lease of Lakshman's life."
So saying, Dashrath blessed his gallant son
Who, trying to adore his father's feet,
Held out with great esteem his hands in vain.
The feet his touch eluded. Said his sire,
(The son of Aja), Raghu's grandson, thus
In gentle accents : "Son, this frame of mine
Is not the same I wielded, while alive.
It is a shadow quite beyond the grasp
Of man whose frame consists of flesh and blood.
It is an image merely, (like the one
Reflected in a glass or limpid spring).
Desist from thine endeavours fruitless, then,
And hie thee home, O precious as my soul !"

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Astonished virtuous Ram inclined his head,
And, led by Maya great, his steps retraced
Towards the earth, and crossed the tunnel deep.
At length he reached his goal, where Lakshman lay,
And where all heroes sorrowed, wide-awake !

———

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BOOK IX.

MEGHNAD'S FUNERALS.

The day was dawning fast and, with a shout
Like roar of sea profound, Ram's troops announced
The success of their leader round the land.
The dreadful din disturbed the demons dire,
And stirred the place where Ravan sat aggrieved
On floor, unmindful of his golden throne.
Astonished, he his premier thus enquired,
"O Saran wise, be pleased to tell me soon,
The foes, afflicted sore throughout the night,
Why raise this hideous noise at break of day?
Is that pretended warrior, Lakshman vile,
To life restored once more? Who knows but that
Relenting gods revived the wretch again?
Shrewd Ram could fetter with his skill unmatched
The ocean with its cease-less currents strong:
His witch-craft caused the slabs of rock to float
On surface of the sea; to cap the globe,
He perished twice; and twice he conquered death.
What feat on earth this juggler may not do?
Pray, tell me, premier, what hath now transpired
To cause his party triumph thus aloud."
With folded hands the premier answered thus,

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"Delusive is the world, O Rakshas' lord :
A god's illusion is a mystery.
The prince of mountains, Gandha-madan huge,
The soul of gods, incarnate, came himself,
And by prescription of the medicine apt
Revived the lifeless Lakshman : hence the yell
The foe exultant makes and rends the sky.
As at the winter's close, a deadly snake
Redoubles in his might, Sumitra's son,
Inspired with martial zeal, like thunder, roars.
Sugriva, likewise, with his Deccan hordes
To Lakshman's shout responds ; as in the woods
The elephants answer to their chieftain's cry."
The lord of Lanka, grieved, upheaved a sigh,
And said, "Resistless is the will of gods :
The mortals and immortals both I quelled :
And, fighting face-to-face, I killed the foe.
Behold, as willed by gods, he comes to life.
By irony of fates, O Saran sage,
Relentless Death forgot to do his work.
For if the lion seizes once a stag,
Can he permit his hapless prey to fly ?
But useless is my grief. For this I know,
The sun of glory of the Rakshas' race
Is sinking down to rest in gloom profound.
My brother Kumbhakarn, like Shambhu brave
With trident armed, expired before his time.
My son who conquered Indra by his might,
And fought with valiant Kartik, Gouri's son,
By freak of fortune, look, hath passed away.
For me the world hath no attractions left,
And figures like a dreary waste in that—
I see no more my kinsmen, dear and near!

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O Saran, go to hero Ram and thus
Announce my purpose, "Lord of Rakshas' race,
So please thee, hero graced with mighty arms,
Armistice solicits only for a week.
Let all thy force remain in our domain:
But, pray, desist from every hostile act.
The Raksha king means duly to perform
The funeral ceremony of his son deceased.
O lord of Raghu's race, a hero's part
Thou shouldst perform. A hero ever keeps
A hero's prestige. By thine arms subdued,
Fair Lanka, fountain-head of warriors brave,
Hath all her gallant children nearly lost.
Among the heroes thou art truly blessed:
For success ever on thy heels attend.
Providence, most benign and source of good,
Upon thy blessed head its favour pours.
A victim to the guile of fates, alas!
The Raksha king disaster courts to-day.
Hence, hero, to his wish accede, I pray."
The premier humbly bowed and quick advanced
With all his colleagues to the destined place.
The huge portcullis by the sentry raised,
The gates flew open with a mighty peal.
The minister afflicted gently stepped
Towards the sea-coast laved by boisterous waves.
The lord, the crown of Raghu's noble race,
With raptures filled, was seated in his tent.
Sumitra's son, the best of heroes, sat
Before his brother, like a tree regaled
By sap at winter's close, or like the moon
With all his digits, or at peep of dawn

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Like lotus gay in bloom. His right was decked
By Bibhishan and other leaders brave,
Undaunted in the war. Thus Rama looked
Like Indra seated on a golden throne
In heaven and tended by his myrmidons.
The messenger in brief addressed him thus,
"The Raksha premier famous in the world
Named Saran with his colleagues, wise and sage,
Desires an interview with thee, my lord."
Thus Rama ordered, "O messenger, quick
Conduct the premier here with great esteem :—
No herald can be slain by rules of war."
Admitted thus, the herald humbly said,
With folded hands, "The lord of Rakshas' race,
So please thee, hero graced with mighty arms,
Armistice solicits only for a week.
Let all thy force remain in our domain ;
But, pray, desist from every hostile act.
The Raksha king means duly to perform
The funeral ceremony of his son deceased.
O lord of Raghu's race, a hero's part
Thou shouldst perform : a hero ever keeps
A hero's prestige. By thine arms subdued,
Fair Lanka, fountain-head of warriors brave,
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Among the heroes, thou art truly blessed :
For success ever on thy heels attends.
Providence, most benign and source of good,
Upon thy blessed head its favour pours.
A victim to the guile of fates, alas!
The Raksha king disaster courts to-day.
Hence, hero, to his wish accede, I, pray."
Responded thus the lord of Raghu's race,

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"O Saran, list, thy master is my foe :
Believe me, none the less, when I assert,
With Ravan I condole with all my heart
In his bereavement. Who feels not agrrieved,
I ask, to see the solar god eclipsed
By demon Rahu ? Even in the woods
The prince of trees consumed by solar rays
Hangs down his head to see the sun oppressed.
Unmindful of a friend or foe, my heart
Goes forth to all alike in their distress.
So, premier, back to Lanka, land of gold !
For seven days and nights among us none
Shall take up arms in war, assure the king.
O noble sage, impress on him the fact,
The virtuous never try to hurt a soul
Engaged in pious rites." With head inclined,
Responded Saran thus, "No hero can
In human world to thee a candle hold.
Thou passest all in wisdom and in strength.
This gracious act of thine, then, well befits
A noble prince of Raghu's worthy line.
Besides, a virtuous man for ever shuns
The course of vice, most loathsome like a snake.
Nikasha's son, the lord of Rakshas' race,
Is matched by thee alone, O prince of men.
I therefore feel regret; (excuse me, pray,)
That in an evil hour, ye, heroes both,
Crossed swords with one another in the war.
But what avails my woe ? The fates' decree,
Like tide resistless, who can ever turn ?
O mighty hero, crown of Raghus line,
Providence that impels the valiant wind
The sea to challenge : that incites again

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The lion to assail the elephant huge :
That makes the eagle prey upon the snake :
The same mysterious agency, I say,
Hath set thyself and Ravan on to war.
No body is to blame in this affair."
The herald blessed by Raghav left the place
To see the Rakshas' king upset by grief,
And seated speechless, shedding copious tears
Which drenched his garb : and Rama, on his part,
True to his word, at once declared a truce.
The chieftains bowed, desisted from the fight,
And sought repose in their respective tents.

In Asok-woods, secluded, cheerless, dark,
Was seated Rama's spouse like Lakshmi sad
By love forlorn, in ocean's gloomy bed.
Anon, came Sarama who, in disguise
As Rakshas' wife, was type of Lanka's charms.
She humbly bowed and sate beside her feet,
When Sita thus began in accents sweet :
"O nymph whose beauty charms the moon, attend :—
The city wails, the reason why, I pray ?
My frightened ears were yestereday assailed
By Rakshas' war-cry dread from morn to eve.
By heroes' footsteps trampled forests dense,
Convulsed by earth-quake, as it were, collapsed.
Bright arrows flashed in heaven likes flames of fire.
At sun-down Raksha troops triumphant yelled,
And entered Lanka with a beat of drum.
But now the balance hath been turned, it seems.

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My heart is curious, just to realise
The issue of the bloody campaign last.'
To whom else shall I turn to clear my doubts ?
For questioned on the point, my sentry look
An arsenal of daggers at my face.
The demoness with her red and rolling eyes,
Like Durga valiant, armed with swords acute,
Ycleped Trijata, hideous to the view,
With fury blinded, rushed to cut my head
Last night. But other warders held her back :
My sad and wretched life was, therefore, spared.
O fair-haired nymph, my bosom thrills with fear,
As features of the hag I call to mind."
Responded Sarama in a gentle tone :—
"O happy damsel, by the grace of luck
The hero Indrajit was slain in war :
And hence the land is wailing, day and night.
The Raksha king, enfeebled now, is doomed :
Nemesis hath descended from the clouds
At last, and firmly seized him by the hand.
Look ! How afflicted damsels beat their breasts,
And how dejection marks the Rakshas' mien.
O damsel beaming with fair, lotus eyes,
Thy husband's younger brother hath achieved
A glorious feat impossible with the gods ;
For Indra's victor he hath put to death,
Invincible warrior, matchless in the world !"
Thus Sita, sweet of tongue :—"In this domain
A gospel of auspicious news to me
Thou ever bearest, Raksha damsel fair.
Sumitra's son is blessed thrice, indeed !
Among all heroes : my mother-in-law
Conceived him at a time when planets smiled.

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The fates, relenting, have been pleased at last
To open wide my dungeon's solid gates,
Though Ravan sole now holds in hand its key.
The upshot let me watch. I donot know
What further troubles are in store for me.
But prick thine ears, my bosom friend. The wail
By degrees gains in volume." Sarama thus
In voice melodious answered, "Damsel chaste,
The Raksha king, intending to perform
The funeral ceremony of his son deceased,
Hath just concluded truce with Raghav brave :
And thus resolved, in dirge and sad array,
His son's remains he carries to the beach.
None shall his weapons wield now for a week
In hostile attitude in Lanka fair.
His promise Ram, the sea of mercy vast,
Hath held out to his foe at his desire.
Oh ! How my heart is rent with grief to learn,
The fair Pramila, child of Danav dire,
Devoted to her husband, heart and soul,
Will just ascend the burning funeral pile :
For with her lord she means to sacrifice herself !
When Kama's body was reduced to dust
By wrath of Shiva, ruler of the world,
Did Rati (grieved) to ashes burn her frame ?
Her husband she out-lived. I wonder, then,
Why fair Pramila seeks to scale the piles ?"
Afflicted Sarama shed a flood of tears.
Incarnate mercy, Mithila's princess fair,
Condoling at her grief, with streaming eyes,
Her mate accosting, gently answered thus :—
" My pretty comrade, in an evil hour,
I saw the light. In shape of danger dire,

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I hap to put out still the lamp of light
In houses trodden by my cursed feet.
To me, it seems, the fates assigned the task
That I should carry perils in my train.
O nymph whose features happy omens mark,
Didst thou not see my husband, best of men,
Consigned with Lakshman to a life in woods :—
Their sire, oppressed by sorrow, lose his life :—
Ayodhya pine in gloom without a king :—
Jatayu noble, terror of his foes,
(By virtue of the might his arms sustained,
While trying to uphold my cause) expire ?
Then look at Lanka. Ah ! unhappy me !
The hapless hero Meghnad breathed his last :
And many a Raksha likewise passed away :
And last Pramila now is courting death,
As fades a flower in spring before its time."
Sarama brushed her tears and thus enquired ;
"Who is to blame, I ask, O princess fair ?
For who uprooted thee, O Champak plant,
And thus deprived the Mango of his share ?
And who from Manas lake of Raghav's heart
The lily plucked to graft it on our soil ?
The sins of Ravan accelerate his fall,
For which he hath to thank himself, my lass,
And no one else on earth, far less thyself.
Afflicted Sarama wept. Aggrieved in woods
Of Asok, Sita wept for Rakshas' sake ! "
Anon with peals of thunder opened wide
The western gate ; through which with silken flags
(Sustained by golden staffs) which touched the sky,

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Unnumbered Rakshas moved. Along the road
In sweet succession standard-bearers passed.
The elephant bore the drum which led the van
And, flourishing, raised a tumult all around.
The infantry next marched :—a solid mass
Of serried gallant phalanx, in a line.
Then passed the horse, the chariots and the mules.
Equipped with darts and scabbards fixed in belt
And crowned with diadems gorgeous, weeping sore,
The Rakshas passed to sea, a ghastly band !
Pramila's hand-maid, Virangana dire,
Like Kali dreadful, fair like Vidya-dhari,
In martial garb, and wreathed with human heads,
And riding on a swarthy, gallant mare,
Assumed a gloomy look like dismal night
Deserted by the digits of the moon.
In plenty tears which trickled down her face
Besmeared her clothes, the mare, the virgin soil.
Some fair one sighed ; some wept in silent grief :
Some darted fiery glances at the foe,
As in a net the tigress, howling wild,
With eyes on fire beholds her hunter close
At hand ! Alas ! That smile, (electric flash !)
The shaft-like piercing glance the damsels cast,
While waging war of love, were now no more !
The mare Vadava, by the maids impelled
And fanned by chowries, as she passed along
Without her rider, bent her head aggrieved
Like stalk of plant disrobed of fragrant flowers.
Her graceful back was saddled now, alas !
With martial vest of Pramila the fair,
Including sword and shield, the quiver fine
The bow colossal and the diadem,

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With gems inlaid. The armour, glowing, called
To mind Pramila's high and heaving breasts :
The belt, now parted from her slender waist,
Appeared to mourn its low, neglected plight.
The band of mournful females passed a-foot
And scattered in profusion golden coins
And shells and basket-fuls of fried rice.
The lady minstrels sang a doleful dirge :
While others, weeping, beat their tender breasts.
Emerged, anon, a chariot made of gold,
(The chief of cars, gigantic like a cloud
With rolling wheels that flashed like lightning
bright
And flag that vied with rainbow in the sky),
But sad and gloomy, like the skeleton bare
Of Durga's image to the stream consigned.
The Raksha heroes wept and screamed aloud :
At times they beat their breasts, bewildered sore
Like lunatics. The golden car contained
A bow colossal, quivers, shields and swords
And conches, discus, mace and other arms,
To wit, steel armour flashing, diadem bright
Like solar rays. The bard in doleful tunes
Sang dirges, thus announcing Rakshas' woe.
Some Rakshas freely scattered golden coins :
Some, flowers rained like trees by winds disturbed.
The water-bearer perfumed water poured
To lay the dust and sand by footsteps raised.
Thus gently to the beach the chariot moved.
Adorned with flowers upon a decent throne,
Beside the corpse, Pramila took her seat.
It seemed as if the spouse of Kam deceased,
Unable to sustain the grievous shock,

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Would perish with her husband dear on earth.
With vermilion her forehead fair was marked :
Bracelets, wreaths of flowers and jewels bright
Adorned her person, slender, fair and frail.
The maid, who held the chowric, shook the same
And wept. The women mourning scattered flowers.
Alas! The lustre of her face was gone!
No more she beamed with arched graceful smiles,
Which played on it before like solar rays
That gambol with the leaves of lotus bright.
In vow of silence was the nymph absorbed ;—
And looked as if her soul had left her frame
And gone to court the presence of her lord :—
The Tree decaying, thus declines the Plant
(His lovely spouse) entwined around his root.
The rank and file advanced with measured steps,
With swords unsheathed and glittering in the sun
And armours framed with gold which dazed the eye.
The savants loudly chanted sacred hymns.
The priests of sacrifice recited spells,
With holy fire they carried in their hands.
The Raksha damsels bore in utensils of gold
Sweet filaments of flowers and musk and clothes,
And saffron, Ganges water, jewels bright
And other objects suited to the hour,
While burning lamps of gold illumed the way.
The drum and trumpet blew with rattling peals :
The cymbals, hollow cups of music, rang :
And wedded women blew on conches loud,
A sound auspicious in an evil hour!
The gloomy Raksha sovereign passed on foot:

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And milk-white was his sheet and garb which looked
Like thorn-apple wreath round Shiva's neck.
His council paced behind him, bowing low,
Attended by the peers of noble blood
And followed by the residents of the land:
And Lanka in their absence pined in gloom,
Like Gokul when lord Krishna left the place.
Lord Ram addressing Angad thus began,
"O prince, a thousand warriors take with thee
And lead them to the sea as Rakshas' friends.
Advance with care. My heart is much perplexed
With woe for Rakshas' sake. I do not mind
A friend or foe in grief. My sympathy
Goes forth to all alike. I cannot send
My younger brother to condole with him:
For Lakshman's sight may bring to Ravan's mind
His son's demise and thus provoke his wrath.
Thy father valiant, crown of royal race,
By kindness conquered Ravan's heart in war:—
Behave with him, as Vali did before."
Directed thus, towards the coast of sea,
A thousand warriors bent their steps apace,
By Angad led. To welkin rushed the gods!
Upon the back of Airavat enthroned,
The lord of heaven, attended by his spouse,
Fair Sachi, graced with never-fading youth:
The general Kartik, on his peacock car:
On checkered chariot, brave Chitra-rath:
The wind-god mounted on a graceful fawn:
God Yama riding on a buffalo dire:
On Pushpak mounted Yaksha, Alaka's king:
Asylum of the nectar, lord of night,

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Serene, the moon adorned with solar beams :
The sons of Aswini, with gentle smiles
And other mighty gods by turns arrived.
Celestial nymphs and Kinnars (musicians,
Both male and female), Apsars, Gandarvas,
(Sweet choristers of Indra) followed suit.
The heavenly music flourished in the sky :
Unearthly beings, seraphs, gods and saints
In legions poured and graced the time and place.
The Rakshas quick alighted at the coast
Of sea and duly raised a funeral pile.
The bearers bore the fragrant sandal-wood
And ghee in piles. The corpse was, later on,
With Ganges water washed and wrapped in silk
And laid on pyre. The Raksha priest pronounced
The mantras. In the sea where pilgrims flock
In numbers, held most sacred in the world,
Pramila bathed and put her jewels off
And doled them out to all. The damsel bowed
With reverence to her elders. Sweet of tongue,
She thus addressed her female band of friends,
"At length, my fair companions, in the stage
Of life, my part as actress hath been closed.
Go back to demon's land. Vasanti dear,
Announce this tidings at my father's feet.
As to my mother":—choked by gushing tears,
The virtuous damsel here abruptly paused :
Her maids, the Danav women, wailed aloud.
Pramila in a while composed herself
And said : "Inform my mother, (please, my mates,)
What fates had on my forehead 'curst inscribed

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Hath come to pass at last. For, with my lord
To whom my parents wedded me, I mount
The pyre. Without the partner of her life
No woman can redemption get on earth.
What more, alas! can I, my comrades, add?
Forget me not, this boon I beg of you."
With this, the virtuous damsel paused, then scaled
The funeral pile, and at her husband's feet
With joy she sat, as on a bed of flowers.
The Raksha trumpet blew: the Pandits loud
The Vedas chanted: and the Raksha dames
Sent forth auspicious notes which joined with wails.
Ascended in a trice the welkin high.
There was a rain of flowers on every side:
Gold ornaments and filaments of flowers
And silk and sandal, saffron, musk and scent
Were doled out duly by the graceful maids.
Animals put to death by scimitar keen,
With ghee anncinted, did they heap around
The funeral pile: as on Navami's day
Of festival of Durga, goddess great
Of energy, the worshipper devout,
To her pedestal slaughtered beasts, consigns.
The Raksha lord advanced and said aggrieved:—
"O Meghnad, how I fondly cherished hopes
To close my life beside thy precious self
On thee I hoped my kingdom to bestow
Before I parted from the world for good.
But quite mysterious are the ways of god!
For fates have robbed me of the joy I sought.
I hoped, my child. in time to bless myself
By seeing thee installed on royal throne

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Graced sweetly on the left side by thy spouse,
The type of royal fortune in my land
In guise of Raksha damsel wedded, fair !
But dis-illusionment hath come at last.
For sins I committed in my previous birth,
The royal sun of Raksha pomp is set,
And swallowed, once for all, by Rahu vile :
For both of you, installed by cruel death,
I see enthroned on funeral piles, today !
With great esteem I worshipped Shiva-lord :
Is this the meed he gave me for my pains ?
To empty Lanka how shall I return ?
What will my kin and subjects think of me ?
When Mandodari, consort mine, will ask :
"Where hast thou left my son, his loved spouse ?
Consignment of their bodies to the sea
What joy secured to thee, O Rakshas' lord ?"
How possibly, then, her heart can I relieve ?
Alas ! My son, invincible, heroes' crown !
What mis-deeds I have done, I am not sure,
For which the fates unkind chastised me thus."
In Kailash, Shiva armed with trident dire
His patience lost. The clustered hair in knots
He wielded round his head indulged in dance :
The dragons dreadful twined around his throat
Like thunder yelled at times. The sacred fire
Which decked his brow with fury burnt ablaze.
The river which in three directions flows
(The sacred Ganges) roared with tumults vast
Like cascade gurgling from the caves of hills.
The Kailash-peak convulsed, shook, off and on :
The world afflicted wept. With folded hands
Thus Durga frightened asked the god supreme,

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"Wherefore, art thou, my lord, incensed today ?
The Raksha perished, as ordained by fates.
The virtuous Ram is not to blame at all.
If thou unjustly Raghav take to task,
Reduce my humble self to ashes first."
So saying, mother held her husband's feet.
The lord of Gouri raised her with esteem,
And said: "O Mountain's child, through Rakshas' grief,
My heart is bursting. Thou dost know full well,
Nikasha's son I love with all my heart.
But as thou intercedest, nymph benign,
I will condone both Ram and Lakshman's fault."
The trident-holder, grieved, thus said to fire.
"O god that sanctifiest all the world,
Pray, with thy touch refine the Raksha pair,
And bring them quickly to this blessed land."
Like flash of lightning rushed the god of fire
And to the earth descended. Quick the pyre
Ablaze began to burn. The assembly
Beheld astounded there a car of fire
Graced by the form divine of Meghnad brave
(Who Indra had subdued) and, on his left,
By fair Pramila's heavenly image bright.
Her person had the bloom of constant youth ;
Eternal smiles of joy her lips suffused !
The stately chariot flew to heaven apace :
The gods rained flowers fragrant : and the world,
Refreshed, resounded with a shout of joy.
With currents white of milk, the Rakshas' band
The burning fire extinguished on the pyre.
The ashes, then, they culled with great esteem
Which found a place at last in ocean's bed.

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The site which marked the piles was washed with care,
With Ganges water pure. They built there-on
A shrine of gold whose summit touched the sky,
And in the end the Rakshas bathed in sea,
And (as it were, consigning to the stream
On Dashami's day the form of Durga fair),
With streaming eyes to home paced back their way.
For seven days and nights sad Lanka wept.

THE END.

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GLOSSARY

EXPLAINING THE PROPER NAMES AND ALLUSIONS.

A

Abhimanyu—son of Arjuna by his wife Subhadra. He killed many warriors on the Kaurava side and was for a time more than a match for such veteran heroes such as Drona, Karna, Duryodhan etc. He could not, however, hold out against overwhelming odds. Seven heroes surrounded him at a time: and he was thus killed by unfair means.

Aditi—mother of the gods.

Airavata—celestial elephant; vehicle of Indra.

Alaka—capital of Kubera (situated on the peak of the Himalaya above the peak of Meru.)

Angada—the son of Vali, the great monkey-chief.

Arjuna—the son of Kunti by Indra: the third Pandava: by his skill in arms he won Draupadi. He also married Subhadra, by whom he had a son named Abhimanyu. Krishna acted as his charioteer in the great war of Kurukshetra. He slew several warriors on the side of the Kauravas. He was a skilful archer and the best of warriors.

Asoka—name of a tree having red flowers: said to put forth fruits, when struck by ladies' feet.

Aswathama—After the last great battle, Aswathama, son of Drona, entered the hostile camp at night and killed the five young sons of the Pandavas. He then ran with the news to Duryodhana who was mortally wounded.

Aswini-Kumaras—the two sons of Aswini, the Sun's wife.

B

Bali—This demon was very powerful and oppressed the gods very much. He was subdued by Vamana (Vishnu in his dwarfish form) who sent him and all his legions to Patala which he rules under his auspices.

Bhartrihari—the celebrated author of the three Satakas and Bhattikavya.

Bhavabhuti—the author of Vira-charita.

Bhimsena—brother of Judhisthira.

Bibhishana—younger brother of Ravana. He several times ad-

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vised his elder brother to restore Sita to Rama: but Ravana would not hear him. So he repaired to Rama and became his staunch friend.

C

Chandra—or moon is masculine according to the Hindu mythology, and has been treated as such throughout the poem.

Chitraratha—the king of the Gandharvas.

D

Danavas—sons of Danu, one of the daughters of Daksha married to Kashyapa.

Dasharatha—king of Ayodhya, had three wives, Kausalya, Kekai and Sumitra. By the first wife he had one son, Rama: by the second he had a son named Bharata: by the third, he had two sons named Lakshmana and Satrughna.

Devadatta—name of the conch-shell of Arjuna.

Dhumraksha—He, Nala, Nil, Keshari and others are monkey chiefs who serve Rama.

Diti—daughter of Daksha, wife of Kasyapa and mother of the demons or Daityas.

Drona—(son of Bharadwaja) and preceptor of the Kauravas and the Pandavas. When the great war commenced, he sided with the former. Being wrongly informed that his son Aswathama was dead, he fell into a swoon: and his head was cut off by the Pandavas.

Durga—wife of Siva, an epithet of Parvati.

Duryodhana—the leader of the Kauravas. On the last day of the Kurukshetra, Bhima fought a duel with him and smashed his thigh with his club.

G

Gandha-Madan—a mountain reputed to possess rare, medicinal drugs.

Gandharva—A celestial musician, a class of demi-gods regarded as the singers or musicians of gods, and said to give good and agreeable voice to girls.

Garuda—The king of birds and conveyance of Vishnu. He is the son of Kasyapa by his wife Vinata. He is the chief of the feathered race, implacable enemy of serpents and the elder brother of Aruna.

Ghatotkacha—the son of Bhima by a female demon named Hidimba. He fought valiantly in the great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas on behalf of the former, but was slain by Karna.

Gouri—same as Durga.

H

Hanumana—the general of the monkeys, who assisted Rama in his war with Ravana. He was begotten by the wind-god on Anjana.

Hidimba—a demoness on whom Bhimasen begot the demon called Ghatotkacha.

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I

Ikswaku—the first monarch in the solar line of kings.

Indra—the god of heaven.

Indrajit—same as Meghnad, so called because he conquered Indra, god of heaven.

Indraprastha—the modern Delhi.

J

Jambuvana—a kind of bear who was of signal service to Rama, at the siege of Lanka. He was also noted for his medical service.

Jatayu—A semi-divine bird and a great friend of Dasharath. He was the son of Aruna by Syeni. He attempted to destroy Ravana, his car and all, while that demon was carrying away Sita, the wife of Rama. He was, however, mortally wounded, and expired. Jatayu is also reputed as the son of Garuda.

Jaya—Jaya and Vijaya are the female attendants or handmaids of Durga.

K

Kaikeyi or Kekai—one of the three wives of king Dasaratha. When Rama was about to be installed as heir-apparent, at the instance of Manthara, her nurse, she instigated her husband to send Rama to the forest and install Bharata in his place.

Kailasa—a peak of the Himalaya and residence of Siva.

Kalidasa—author of Raghuvansa etc; the Shakespeare of India.

Kama-Kama is the Cupid of Hindu mythology. His wife is Rati. When the gods wanted a commander for their forces in their war with Taraka, they sought the aid of Kama in drawing the mind of Shiva towards Parvati. Kama undertook the mission, but Shiva, being disturbed in his devotions, burnt him to ashes. Kama is same as Madana.

Kamala, Rama, Indira—these are names of Lakshmi.

Karna—son of Kunti, begotten on her by the Sun-god, while she was yet a virgin residing at her father's house. He was a celebrated warrior on the side of the Kauravas.

Kartikeya—Skanda, Mars or the god of war of the Indian mythology: so called because he was reared by the six Krittikas. He is the son of Siva.

Kichaka—While Draupadi in the guise of Sairandhri was residing in the court of king Virata, Kichaka once happened to see her and endeavoured to violate her. Draupadi complained of his conduct to Bhima Bhima, agreeably to a pre-concerted plan, was lying down on the bed as Draupadi at midnight. Kichaka, as prearranged, went there and wanted to embrace Bhima whom he mistook for the lady. But he was crushed to death by Bhima.

Kinnara—a class of demigods having a human figure with the head of a horse, attached to the service of Kuvera: a celestial musician.

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Kishkindhya—name of a country; capital of Vali.

Krittika—the six stars represented as nymphs acting as nurses to Kartikeya, the god of war.

Krishna—is the most celebrated hero of the Hindu mythology, and the most popular of all the deities. Though the real son of Vasudeva and Devaki, and thus a cousin of Kamsa, he was for all practical purposes the son of Nanda and Yasoda by whom he was brought up and in whose house he spent his childhood. The chief companions of his youth were the Gopis or wives of the cowherds of Gokul, among whom Radha was his special favourite.

Krittivasa—the author of the Bengali Ramayana.

Kumbhakarna—a gigantic demon, brother of Ravana (killed by Rama).

Kurukshetra—an extensive plain near Delhi, the scene of the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

L

Lakshmana.—step-brother of Rama, the son of king Dasharatha by Sumitra. He accompanied Rama in his exile to the forest and was much devoted to him.

Lakshmi—the wife of Vishnu and goddess of wealth and prosperity corresponding to Roman Ceres. She is said to have sprung from the ocean along with other precious things or jewels when it was churned for nectar by the gods and demons.

Lanka—the capital and residence of Ravana and identified with the island of Ceylon, or the chief town in it. According to some, Lanka was much larger than the present Ceylon.

M

Mahanavami or Navami—the ninth day in the bright half of Aswina sacred to the worship of Durga.

Mahisha—name of a demon who was killed by Durga.

Mainaka—name of a mountain, son of Himalaya and Mena, who alone retained his wings (when Indra clipped those of other mountains) on account of his friendship with the ocean.

Manasa—name of a sacred lake on the mount Kailasa.

Mandara—the flower of the coral tree.

[M]andhata—son of Yuvanashwa, an old king of the solar race.

Mandodari—the principal wife of Ravana. She advised her husband to deliver Sita to Rama and thus save himself from certain ruin, but he did not heed her.

Matali—the name of the charioteer of Indra.

Maya—the goddess of unreality or illusion. The Pradhana, Prakriti or Nature.

Meghnad—(the hero of the poem), son of Ravan. He defeated Indra, god of heaven and was eventually slain by Lakshman: (written also as

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Meghanad for the sake of metre.)

Moya—the architect of the demons. He built the three cities for the demons. He was the architect of the demons. He is also said to have built a splendid hall for the Pandavas.

Murala—a river.

Murari—the author of Anargha Raghav-kavya.

N

Namuchi—a demon slain by Indra.

Nandi—an attendant of Siva.

Nikasha—the mother of Ravan.

Nikumbhila—a cave or grove at the Western gate of Lanka.

Nil or Neel—name of a monkey-chief in the army of Rama.

Nrisinha—The fourth incarnation of Vishnu, (half-lion and half-man.) In this incarnation he destroyed the great demon-king Hiranyakasipu who fancied that he was superior to Vishnu.

P

Panchavati—the part of the Dandaka forest where the Godavari rises, and where Rama dwelt for a considerable time with his wife.

Patal—the last of the seven regions or worlds peopled by Nagas (snakes).

Pralaya—universal destruction at the end of a Kalpa.

Pramila—the wife of Meghnad.

Preta—the spirit before the obsequial rites are performed.

Pretapura—the city of Yama.

R

Raksha—a demon, a Titan (the author always uses it for Rakshasa). Pl: Rakshas, meaning demons or Titans, the followers of Ravan.(Raksha and Rakshas have always been used in this poem.)

Rakta-vija—a general who fought on behalf of Sumbha and Nisumbha, the two demons killed by Durga.

Rama or Ram—the son of Dasharath, king of Ayodhya. Dasharath resolved to install him as heir-apparent. But on the eve of his coronation, his favourite wife Kaikeyi (step-mother of Rama), at the instigation of her nurse Manthara, demanded from her husband the exile of Rama to the forest for fourteen years and instalcation of her own son Bharata as crown-prince. Rama went to the forest, accompanied by his wife Sita and his devoted brother Lakshman. Ravana, king of Lanka, carried off his wife Sita, being assisted by Maricha. Hanuman, the general of the monkeys, ascertained that she was in Lanka. The monkeys built a bridge across the ocean over which Rama passed with his troops, conquered Lanka, killed Ravana and recovered *Sita*.

Rati—the goddess of love, wife of Kama.

Ravana.—king of Lanka and the chief of the Rakshas. While Rama was passing his years of exile in the forest, Ravan carried off his wife Sita. He

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was killed by Rama. He had ten heads.

Rudra—name of Siva.

S

Sambhu—the same as Siva.

Sanjaya—the charioteer of the king Dhritarashtra. He narrated the events of the great war to his blind master.

Sarama—the wife of Bibhishan.

Saran—Prime Minister of Ravana.

Saryu—a river in Ayodhya.

Shachi—the wife of Indra.

Shurpanakha—a sister of Ravana. She was attracted by the beauty of Rama and wanted to marry him. Rama asked her to try Lakshmana who also refused her. This circumstance provoked the demoness who threatened to eat up Sita. But Lakshmana cut off her ears and nose.

Sita—daughter of king Janaka, and wife of Rama. She was carried away by Ravana and was subsequently recovered by Rama.

Siva or Shiva—the third god of the sacred Hindu Trinity, who is entrusted with the work of destruction, as Brahma and Vishnu are with the creation and preservation of the world.

Sugriva—a monkey chief and brother of Vali. By the advice of Kabandha, Rama went to Sugriva who told him how his brother had treated him and besought his assistance in recovering his wife, promising him at the same time that he would assist Rama in recovering his wife Sita. Rama, therefore, killed Vali and installed Sugriva on the throne. He then assisted Rama with his hosts of monkeys in conquering Ravana and recovering Sita.

Sumbha and Nisumbha—demons killed by Durga.

Sumitra—the mother of Lakshman and Satrughna : and one of the three wives of Dasarath.

Sunda and Nisunda—they were sons of Nikumbha. They got a boon from Brahma that they would not die until they killed themselves. They were very oppressive. Indra sent down a lovely nymph called Tilottama. On her account, they quarrelled and killed one another.

T

Tara—wife of Vali. She married Sugriva after her husband was killed by Rama, (see Sugriva).

Taraka—a demon killed by Kartikeya.

Trijata—a female demon, kept by Ravana, to watch over Sita, when she was detained in the Asoka-vana.

Tripura—the three cities of gold, silver and iron in the sky, air and earth built for demons by Maya.

U

Urmila—the wife of Lakshman.

Umapati—Shiva. He conquered death. Uma is the name of his wife.

Urvasi—She along with many others, Rambha, Chitralekha, Misrakeshi, Mohini, Tilottama etc., is a nymph of heaven.

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V

Vaitarani—Styx, the river of hell.

Vali—see Sugriva. A celebrated monkey-chief. Tara, wife of Sugriva, was seized by Vali, but she was restored to her husband, when Rama slew him.

Valmiki—a celebrated sage, the author of the Ramayan. At first he was a robber named Ratnakara: but was subsequently brought to the path of virtue, through the grace of a great sage. He is the fountain-head of Sanskrit-poetry.

Vamana—Name of Vishnu in his fifth incarnation when he was born as a dwarf to humble the demon Bali (see Bali).

Varuni—the wife of Varuna or Neptune (sea-god).

Vidyadhari—a class of de goddesses or semi-divine bei

Virabhadra—a powerful h created by Siva from his m ed hair.

Virvahu—a son of Rav (killed by Rama): after who death the story begins.

Vishnu—the second deity of t sacred Triad, entrusted wit the preservation of the world which duty he is represente to have duly discharged by hi various incarnations.

Vritra—a demon killed by Indra.

Y

Yaksha—a demi-god attendant, specially, on Kuvera, and employed in the care of his gardens and treasures.

Yama—the Indian Pluto: the god of death, the infernal world.

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